

14 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. 2 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? 3 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. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going.”

5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

8 Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

9 Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10 Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. 11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. 12 Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

There is a way

Locks are meant to keep honest people honest. In other words keys grant access and restrict access to a select group of keyholders but that’s not always the case. Locks don’t always work. I’ve had two cars stolen. I’ve been taught to bypass locks. There is always a way around a lock which means they aren’t all that exclusive especially if someone really wants in. Locks only keep honest people honest.

Is that true for God? Does God restrict access to him? Most people think they have access to God that they can just open the door and walk right into his presence with their hopes and dreams and sometimes even their demands. Access is supposedly granted by good behavior, hard work, or even faithfulness to God. The thought that if we just work hard and remain faithful God has to allow me in is natural for us but Jesus has other observations. He says, *‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’* God is nothing like a lock. He is not bypassed. There is no amount of blunt force that can find another way in but there is a way.

Yet that is frustrating to many because if you're anything like me you don’t like to be restricted and you too will find access by any means possible. But there is no other way. While so many would use these Words of Jesus as a club to smash people into submission, they are strictly words of promise. **There is a way. That way is open.** You have exclusive access to the Father through his Son: Jesus.

It may be a bit strange to jump back to the beginning of the Passion during the season of Easter. We should be celebrating the resurrection not going back to the night before Good Friday. And yet during this time we find some of the most comforting passages in all of scripture. It’s a troubling time. The disciples had been expecting a coronation of a King but instead they are met with the suffering servant. Jesus speaks of dying, betrayal, Peter’s denial, and ultimately his departure. *“I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me... Where I am going, you cannot come.”* Jesus comforts his disciples for Good Friday as well as the Ascension with these words, *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God;*

believe also in me. 2 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? 3 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. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going.

That's a lot to take in. They must have wondered how they could carry on without him. They've left everything to follow him, friends, family, and work. There is so much disappointment and confusion. They don't want Jesus to leave. Maybe they are wondering what they said or did to offend. Thomas, almost in desperation, responds, "*Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?*" Thomas thinks that Jesus could be leaving for another place here on earth. If that's the case nothing will stop them from following Jesus. Thomas isn't alone. In an effort to peek behind the locked door Philip requests, "*Show us the Father and that will be enough for us.*" What we've heard from you isn't enough, but just a glimpse of the Father's glory will do.

The disciples disappoint Jesus again. Jesus wants them to understand that they already have everything they need to gain access before the Father. They have Jesus and that is all they need. There isn't anywhere they need to go or anything that they have to do. They have all they need in him and yet they want so much more from road maps to a glimpse of the final destination.

We have all we need in Jesus as well. But we might not like to be restricted to a single point of access. People don't like to be restricted. I have a lot in common with the society that screams, "*The only way...*" How judgemental, intolerant, and narrow minded - I'll show you..." That's because we are rebellious by nature. We don't like to be restricted and when Christianity claims, "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*" Those words hurt and are often viewed from the negative side of exclusion, "*You're locking us out? There is no access.*" But that was not the purpose behind Jesus' words. They are here to comfort his disciples and reassure them they know the way. They have all they need in this life. We do too.

Jesus prepares us for life in a world after Easter which is sometimes hostile and anything less than comfortable. We know the same fear as the disciples, the doubt. Depression as the world and even our health fall apart around us. We may feel lost and looking for a way back to the Father through a side door to skirt the suffering, the death, that valley of the shadow of death that God promises he will lead us through. Or maybe we are more like Philip wanting assurance that the key will work. "*Show us the Father and that will be enough for us.*" Open the door..

Provide us with a parlor trick. Give me proof of your existence. Give me something anything because your Word just isn't enough. I want to hedge my bets. Lord if you would just... take away the pain, provide peace, give me more proof." A sign of your presence in our lives that would be enough. But that wouldn't satisfy nor would it be enough. It would only lead us to want more. When the truth is we should be barred from his presence and locked out forever.

Instead on the night of his betrayal, on a night when Jesus is troubled by all that is about to happen to him, he comforts his disciples. Just think in a few hours time he will be stripped, beaten, and bloodied. But Jesus only thinks of them. He doesn't angrily sluff off their questions, "*You know the ways, pick one and follow it. You can't go wrong.*" He points them to the way. "*If you know me, you will know my Father also*" (14:7a). That phrase is a condition of fact. Jesus is stating, "if you know me (and you do), you will know my father also. And so that there can be no misunderstanding Jesus clarifies, "*From now on, you do*

know him and have seen him" (14:7b). When that wasn't enough for Philip Jesus provides even more evidence.

Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. Jesus spoke as one who had authority. And to this day Jesus words hold us captive. Jesus proclaimed a message unlike any other. A message of unconditional love for sinners who don't deserve it. It wasn't just his words but his actions demonstrate that Jesus is who he claims to be. Jesus healed the sick, restored the paralytic. Gave sight to the blind, cast out demons, and raised the dead. All of these were only a preview of an even greater miracle: the empty tomb. Death was conquered. A way has been opened for all. Jesus made his way back to his Father to prepare a place for you. He gave the promise, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. I will come back and take you to be with me."* That's not a threat. That's a promise providing exclusive access. That's the truth. That brings life.

We are offered a way to God that we can do nothing on our own power to receive. No matter how good we are, now matter how often we pray or go to church, no matter how much money we put in the offering plate our works will not get us into heaven. Jesus hasn't abandoned us. Jesus paid a high price for us and he has left us with evidence of his love. That's what we receive in the Lord's Supper. His body and blood for our forgiveness. He reassures us that there is room. He is preparing a place. And, *"You will see greater works than these."*

What? Greater works than the healing of the blind and raising the dead. How can this promise be true? God has poured out his Spirit in us through the word so that we who were once not a people (excluded, cut off, and locked out of God's presence) are now a people of God. We are given exclusive access to the Father, miracles won't work only God's Word will. The greatest work is to share the gospel message that the door is open, a way has been made, that's the truth that brings life.

Remember Jesus' words. *"Do not let your hearts be troubled."* Don't worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow can worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. There isn't anything you have to do. Jesus has done it all. You are given exclusive access to the Father. You have more than a seat reserved for you. You have a home prepared for you. There is room for you. There is enough room for all of us.

You can try to barge your way into the presence of God. You already have access. You don't need to bypass any locks, any laws, because Jesus perfectly fulfilled them all in your place. The door is open. Don't make salvation any more difficult. Look to Jesus, the one who was troubled and yet comforts us in all our troubles with the assurance of exclusive access to the Father for his sake. Amen.