

Remaining in Christ: Jesus' "I AM" Statements in the Gospel of John

Session VII:

Commentary on the Scripture (John 14:1-15)

The Way, the Truth, and the Life

Commentary on the Scripture

- *"I AM the way, and the truth, and the life"*

In v. 6 we encounter our next "I AM" saying. This divine name, which reveals and illuminates the character and nature of God in and through the person of Jesus, is depicted in three related descriptions – the way, the truth, the life.

In the Jewish world of the first century, the "way" refers to behavior, the way people walk in the world. In this case, "the way" refers to the particular patterns of life – the specific actions related to Jesus' being, knowing, and doing – what he is demonstrating for his disciples.

Recall the opening verses of the Gospel (1:3-5). As the embodiment of the divine *logos* – the divine Word, Reasoning, or Wisdom of God – Jesus becomes the "truth." As we noted in an earlier session, the Greek word translated as "truth" (*alētheia*) means to be "unforgetting." Jesus *never forgets* the divine image through which everything in the world has been created (John 1:3-4). Through his life, his work, and his death, Jesus continually remembers and demonstrates for every human being how to live the moral life associated with the divine image in and through which we have all been created. Jesus is "the way" to the Father because he reveals the character and nature of the Father into which we should live.

Finally, once again recalling the opening verses of the Gospel, Jesus shows the world the "life" that God promises to everyone. The incarnation of the *logos* in Jesus is the light that has come into the world to overcome darkness and bring life to the world. All people who walk "the way" of Jesus, by stepping into his patterns of life, experience the abundant life that God promises to everyone. This is abundant life that has no end or limitations, as the resurrection of Jesus after death demonstrates for us.

- *There are different dimensions of the verb "believing"*

The verb "to believe" is prevalent throughout the Gospel of John. But it has different nuances throughout this gospel, depending on how it is used in each sentence. These different uses become clear in this passage.

In vv. 1 and 12 the verb “to believe” is followed immediately by the Greek preposition *eis*, which indicates movement *into* something – movement from one place to another. In v. 1 Jesus tells his disciples to “believe *into* God, believe also *into* me.” We see this even more clearly in v. 12, where Jesus tells them that the disciple who “believes *into* me” will do even greater works than they have seen Jesus do. These phrases denote trust or belief that allows a disciple to *move into* a deeper and more intimate connection and relationship with God and with Jesus. It’s as if Jesus invites us to act on our belief or trust by *actively stepping into* the life he is showing us how to live. He is inviting us to step into “the way” he has been demonstrating for his disciples how to walk in the world. And by doing so, they “come to the Father” (v. 6). As we live into “the way”, we, too, come to the Father.

Next, in v. 10, Jesus encourages his disciples to “believe *that* I am in the Father and the Father is in me.” He wants his followers to trust *what* he tells them.

Finally, in v. 11, Jesus instructs his followers to believe *him* – to see him as a trustworthy teacher and model of the life God intends humans to live. And, says Jesus, if for some reason you can’t yet trust me, then at least believe me because of the works you see God performing through me.

- *The “words” of Jesus and the “works” of God (v. 10)*
Because Jesus and the Father are one, their character, nature and “works” are indistinguishable (vv. 10-11). In v. 10 Jesus equates his “words” (Greek: *rhēmata*) with the “works” done by the Father. This connection draws on the metaphorical way we talk about the otherwise transcendent and unknowable God. As we mentioned in the video associated with this session, Jesus uses the Greek *rhēmata*, which alludes to the creation story in Genesis. God “speaks” a word and the creation of the world takes place. For example, according to Genesis 1:3, “Then God *said*, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.”

Here, in v. 10, Jesus speaks his “words” and through them God “works” to bring abundant life to the world. Consequently, promises Jesus, God will perform even greater works of life-giving creation through the people who hear the words of Jesus and believe into him by following his way and walking in his footsteps (v. 12). “If you love me,” says Jesus, “you will keep my commandments” (v. 15).