



WEEKLY STUDY March 17-23, 2024

(Use this guide to individually or with a group dive deeper into this week's sermon.)

Our sermon series for Lent is: The Way, The Truth, The Life. The I Am Statements of Jesus. Lent is a sacred season in the church when we walk closely with Jesus through his ministry, death, and resurrection. Over the next 40 days, we will discover who God is through the I AM statements of Jesus found in the book of John. These statements reveal the heart and character of God and invite us into God's love and care.

Our Scripture this week is:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. 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? 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. And you know the way to the place where I am going.’ Thomas said to him, ‘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 you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.’” **John 10:14-18**

- 1)** Lent is the time of year when we intentionally slow down, commit ourselves to practices that nurture our faith, and seek God. With this year's theme for Lent we are looking deeply at these questions: Who is God? Week One we examined the story of what God meant when Moses for God's name and God said, “I AM who I Am.” Pastor Sam reminded us that through this statement God was reminding Moses (who then would remind the people), “I am who I have always been and I'm not going to change.” God is faithful to the promises God has made. In week two Sam told us we now look at the I am sayings of Jesus, knowing that Jesus is going to build on and expand for us images of God. Our first was, ‘I AM the light of the world.’ In this statement Sam said we are reminded that God is who helps us illumine our sin, not to shame us but to help find transformation. Week three we had this statement: I AM the bread of life. We were reminded that we hunger both for the bread we eat that physically feeds us and for the bread God provides that spiritually feeds us. Last week we explored what Jesus means with “I AM the Good Shepherd.” Through this image we see God as tender and loving – holding and healing us. This week our focus is on “I am the Way, the Truth, the Life.”

Question: When you hear the phrase from Jesus, “I am the Way, the Truth, the Life.”, what images appear to you? What attributes do you see in Jesus (and thus in God) through the use of these images?

- 2) We are considering a three-in-one “I AM” statement from Jesus this week. We start first with “I AM the way.” Pastor Gracie in her time with the children talked about Jesus and likened his statement to a map. She used a treasure map that leads a person to a treasure. And she said Jesus guides us in life and stays with us. Pastor Sam then referenced what Gracie had said and included these images as well: Jesus is our compass; our navigator; our North Star. Seeing Jesus as the way is not the same as all living identical lives. Through his life, we see attributes that are part of the way: lovingkindness; care for others; mercy and justice. Sam told us that in today’s culture we find ourselves pitted against one another and asked to make binary choices. She then asked us to think of a “third way” – one that keeps us in relationship with others and with God.

Question: Think through some of what you heard Pastor Sam say regarding “the way” on Sunday. What for you is the most important take-away related to Jesus’ saying: “I AM the way?”

- 3) The second statement to ponder is “I AM the truth.” Pastor Sam talked about the difficulty we often have in determining what is truth. She says we have to turn down the noise of this world and suspend judgment and listen for the discerning, wise, voice of Jesus. She pointed us to the United Methodist use of what is called, “the quadrilateral.” We are to discern truth through Scripture, Tradition, Reason, & Experience. We study scripture; we look at the traditions of faith; we use our minds; and we consider both our own experience and that of others. The power of discernment includes listening and looking for how each of these supports and interacts with the other three. Think of this as something like a wind chime. Each has its own note, but alone, it’s not the whole. It’s the knocking against one another that gives us the full music.

Question: How have you used scripture, tradition, reason and experience in times of trying to determine what is truth?

- 4) Our third statement is, “I AM the life.” Pastor Sam told about a group building exercise that was part of her meeting with all who are getting ready to go to General Conference. One of the questions was: “What would you tell your younger self?” She said responses included: Slow down. Chill out. Put yourself around a small group of people you trust. Hug your mom. Try new things. Trust your instincts.” Thinking about this enables us to state truths about life that is good with priorities that are important. What Sam told us about truth is the same for life: we have to turn down the noise of this world and listen to the voice of Jesus. A life with Jesus guiding us is a full life.

Question: Consider the question that Sam’s group pondered: What would you tell our young self about life?

Prayer: (This week our prayer is an adaptation of Sunday’s Affirmation of Faith)

“Gracious God. We come to you with praise and thanksgiving. You have created us and you have named us as your own. Too often we forget this truth. And in so doing, we find ourselves struggling. Help us trust in your way. Expand what we believe is possible, what we imagine to be true. Lead us away from simple answers. Guide us as we ask questions, discover nuance, and explore the mysteries of faith. Be with us as we hold the tensions of life, for they surely will not overcome us. May we follow your example and stay faithful in the struggle. Show us the way, O Lord. You are the way, the truth and the life. Amen

Weekly Challenge: In this fifth week of Lent we continue to observe this as a time to deepen our faith; to spend time listening for God’s guidance; to give witness to God through our actions and practices. What daily practices are helping you deepen your faith this week. What practices do you need to limit or stop in order for faith building to be done? At the end of each day reflect on when you might have been called to choose between 2 oppositional ways. What would be a third way – the way of life – in each situation?

(Weekly study guide prepared by Rev. MaryJane Pierce Norton)