

5 Easter A 2017 SML
JN 14:1-12

When Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," this was equivalent to saying that:

- ✓ without the Way there is no going;
- ✓ without the Truth, there is no knowing;
- ✓ and without the Life, there is no living.

While I was on vacation a few years ago, I met a man on the beach and a woman on the airplane. The man I befriended. The woman remained just an acquaintance. Upon learning I was a priest both the man and the woman had questions about religion.

- Both the man and the woman were fallen away Catholics.
- Both the man and the woman believe wholeheartedly in God.
- Both the man and the woman struggle with the belief that Jesus is God.
- Both the man and the woman would at least agree that Jesus was indeed a good man.
- Both the man and the woman would agree more with Unitarian dogma than Christian dogma, for the Unitarian rejects the doctrine of the Trinity but accepts the oneness of God and the teachings of Jesus.

Using as a premise that Jesus was indeed a good man, and the teachings of Jesus, found specifically in the Gospel of John, from which this evening's (morning's) gospel is taken, I'd address the belief of the man and the woman, as well as the belief of the Unitarian.

John's gospel is referred to as "the different gospel." Matthew, Mark and Luke are referred to as "the synoptic gospels." The word "synoptic" means similar, literally, "seen through one eye." If you placed the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke side by side, you would see many striking similarities with few differences.

A major concern of Matthew, Mark and Luke is to describe heaven. These evangelists use parable after parable to describe heaven.

- The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed.
- The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant's search for fine pearls.
- The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sows good seed in his field.
- The kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of heaven . . .

John, on the other hand, is the different gospel. There are

very few similarities between the synoptic gospels and John. While the synoptics are concerned about describing heaven, John is concerned about describing Jesus. John uses "I am" saying after "I am" saying to describe Jesus.

- ✓ I am the bread of life.
- ✓ In last Sunday's gospel, I am the good shepherd; I am the sheepgate.
- ✓ I am the light of the world.
- ✓ I am the resurrection.
- ✓ I am the vine.
- ✓ And in today's gospel, I am the way, and the truth, and the life.

Now the Jews were not so much taken aback by the similes:

- ✓ bread of life,
- ✓ good shepherd,
- ✓ sheepgate and so forth.

Rather, the Jews were offended by the "I am" because "I am" is God's name. When Moses asked Yahweh in the Burning Bush for his name, God said, "I AM who AM. This is what you shall tell the Israelites. I AM sent me to you." So every time Jesus

said, "I AM the bread of life" or "I AM the way" or "I AM the truth" or "I AM the life," they wanted to kill him for calling himself God's name, I AM.

Buddha founded Buddhism. Buddha wrote a code which he said would be a useful guide for men in darkness. At his death, Buddha told his disciple this guide "shall be your master when I have left you." Jesus left no written message. Jesus' message was Himself.

Mohammed founded Islam. At his death Mohammed said, "Fearful, beseeching, seeking for shelter, weak and in need of mercy, I confess my sin before Thee." Jesus said no such thing. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." This was equivalent to saying that without the Way there was no going; without the Truth, there is no knowing; and without the Life, there is no living.

Some of you may have read the article that first appeared in the ed/op section of the Washington Post, that has since gone viral on the Internet, entitled, "Like Pope Francis? You'll Love Jesus!" Jesus was lovable because Jesus was so personal. The Pharisees lived by the book. When they brought the adulterous woman to Jesus they looked into a book to find the

answer. The Book of Leviticus says she should die. Jesus looked into her eyes. Jesus knew adultery did not make her happy. He said, "Go home and avoid this sin." I agree with the man and the woman in Florida. Jesus was truly a good man.

When the rich, young man came to Jesus and asked to find meaning in his life, Mark says Jesus looked at him and loved him. Jesus was lovable because he was so personal. I agree with the man and the woman in Florida. Jesus was truly a good man.

But if Jesus is God as well as man, then His language made sense and everything He said is intelligible. But if Jesus is not God, then some of his most precious sayings like "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" are nothing more than narcissism that breathes the spirit of Satan rather than the spirit of a good man.

If Jesus is God, He spoke the literal truth and we can take Him at His word. But if Jesus is not God, then Jesus lied.

No human could be good and at the same time be a liar. And instead of being above His Christian followers, He would be infinitely below the worst of them. It is easier to believe that Jesus is God than to explain how a liar could be taken as a

model by the Christian world. Jesus could not be called a sincere and good teacher. He could not be lovable. His sacrifice on the cross would become suspect, and a dated thing if he were not God. And if he were not God, the Roman soldier, who had his own false gods and was hardened both to war and death, could not have come to the answer during the Crucifixion when he declared beyond any shadow of a doubt, "Truly this man was Son of God."

If Jesus is not God, then He is not the way, the truth, or the life. And that would be equivalent to saying there is no going, there is no knowing, and there is no living.

And since today is Mother's Day . . .

2000 years ago, Our Blessed Lord used the "Ego Eimi" the I AM saying, "I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life" to help explain who He is.

And what we got was simple Love, Love beyond Love, feeding a hungry person, healing a broken heart, resurrecting a tortured spirit, leading us like a good mother . . .

From day one, Mom:

- ✓ has helped us through our every challenge,
- ✓ answered our every question.

- ✓ She had reasoned with us,
- ✓ explained God to us,
- ✓ loved us,
- ✓ invited us,
- ✓ rebuked us.

Mom had displayed all the wonders of the Father's glory in front of our eyes time and time again. She taught us how to know Jesus and to know His Father, time and time again.

2000 years ago, He said, "I am the way, the truth and the life."

Today, He would just as aptly say, "I am the good mother."