

Five amazing truths before lunch!

John 14:1-14

HTHQ – 20.4.08

I may well have preached on this Gospel passage, or at least the first few verses, more often than any other part of NT

- because so often chosen by me or mourners for Funerals.

Not only in first 3 verses, but throughout the passage, we have some **extraordinary declarations** by Jesus, some **amazing ideas**.

I remember hearing about a Vicar who seemed regularly to have 3 brilliant ideas before breakfast! I wonder if the same could be said about Tim, our Vicar, who is full of great ideas for the church and parish – just what we need.

Anyway, I thought I would give this sermon the title, **‘5 amazing truths before lunch’**.

In this conversation with His disciples in John 14 there are statements by Jesus which are very stretching and challenging, and, you might feel, rather **embarrassing** in our multi-cultural and multi-faith society.

In fact, a very good friend of mine, knowing this was the Gospel for today and that I planned to preach on it, was concerned that I could sound like some Christian fundamentalist, unless I was careful how I preached on verses such as ‘No one comes to the Father except through me’. A very wise warning, but I am pressing on with John 14 anyway.

The temptation with **awkward passages**, even in the Gospels, is to sideline or ignore them, or to comment ‘Jesus probably didn’t say that anyway’.

It is true that all the Gospel writers, especially John, reshaped and rearranged and expanded their material, so that it spoke more clearly to their readers.

It is also true that we do not always have the exact **words** of Jesus – obviously we do not in sense that Jesus spoke in Aramaic and the NT is in Greek – but I believe that because of the inspiration of the Spirit in the creating of the Scriptures, we do hear the authentic **voice** of Jesus.

And furthermore there are several passages, including many verses here, with the snappy conversation with Thomas and Philip, where it is reasonable to conclude ‘this is the real thing’, ‘this is what was actually said’.

The **first** and central truth is in verse 9-10a: *Whoever has seen me has seen the Father...*

John, of all the Gospel writers, is clearest in setting out the truth that Jesus is God himself living a fully human life. Start of Gospel: 1:1.14 And near end of Gospel: 20:28, 31. In our pluralist society we rightly want to affirm the value of other cultures and other religions, but it seems clear to me that the **uniqueness** of Jesus Christ means we cannot make some nice but meaningless statements like:

‘All religions are really the same’, or

‘All religions are equally valid in pointing us towards God.’

If we believe what the Scriptures and the Creeds proclaim, then we know Jesus is not just a helpful guide to understanding God, a wise prophet, but the **unique revelation** of what God is like.

(We have, as J V Taylor put it in the title to his famous book, ‘a Christ-like God’)

I like the illustration of a mirror placed at floor level so that it is easier to see the ceiling of a great Cathedral. The human Jesus shows us what God is like, at a level we can understand and appreciate.

Of course, this truth is not to be proclaimed arrogantly or without compassion and careful listening. Too often the Church has denied its Lord by speaking of Him in an arrogant or patronising way - as if it were not following the One who in humility washed the disciples’ feet - and sacrificially gave up his life as the Good Shepherd. But, it is true none the less.

From this first amazing truth follow all the others I want to highlight in this passage.

The **second** is in verse 6 ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’.

Books have been written on why it is true, or not true, or shouldn’t be true. It sounds embarrassing, very exclusive, and we can lose our nerve, but we need to hold to the uniqueness of the One who said it and we need to *try* to understand what He really meant.

In a sense He is saying more than in verse 9; Jesus is more than the best, the fullest, way to *know about* God,

He is the way to **a relationship** with God, to **reconciliation** with God. ‘No one comes to the Father except through me’.

He makes possible through His incarnation and the Cross and Easter what would otherwise *not* be available to humanity. I assume, as does the New Testament, that Jesus’ coming to us was not some kind of optional trip,

but absolutely **essential** for humanity. Unless He had come, we were lost. But through Him, a lasting relationship with God is possible. **Only He** has made it possible.

Does that mean that *only* Christian believers have this relationship, this life with God? No, of course not. But it does mean that for anyone eternal life with the Lord God has been made possible by what Jesus has done, **whether people realise this fact or not**. That I think is the clue as to how we can hold on to verse 6 today.

I seem to remember an **illustration** some one gave of this truth: it is like travelling along a motorway or major road, and you reach your destination, say Oxford from London, and in fact you have crossed over the Thames or a main line railway, and you couldn't have got there without those bridges. But because you were chatting or dozing in the passenger seat you had not realised those bridges were there.

Jesus is the bridge between God and Humanity, the way, *whether people realise it or not*.

Many make use of it, of Him, many of other religions or none; not those who have reached the destination by living wonderful lives, but those who in some way know they need mercy and love and a life beyond their earning or deserving – all that Jesus came to offer.

Three more amazing truths to go, and no time to expand on them. So for your conversation over lunch or reflection during the week:

Thirdly, verse 12. 'the one who believes in me....wil do greater works than these'.

Wow! In what way 'greater' than all we read about in the Gospels? In scope? In world-wide impact? Whatever, the truth is dependent on Jesus uniqueness and His *going to the Father* – so that **His Spirit** can be given to His people to enable them to live and to act.

Fourthly, verse 14. 'If in my name you will ask me for anything I will do it'.

What a promise about prayer! But it's about prayer which truly reflects what Jesus wants to do through us. 'In my name' is not about words to be tacked on to the end of a prayer, but the content of what we are asking for.

Fifthly, back to the opening verses of the chapter, often read at funerals. Jesus, by going ahead of us through death and resurrection is preparing for us to go through, and to be absolutely safe and secure, because on this

trip, we have (so to speak) booked ahead! Anyway, there's plenty of room, of rooms. Room for so many, all sorts, as we were thinking earlier.

(The story about St. Peter showing newcomers around heaven, and passing a room of charismatics/Anglicans/Christians – insert your own group! He says: 'Quiet here, they think they are the only ones here!')

'I will come again and will take you to myself'. I love that promise. About the second coming? Yes, but also about our individual crossing over, as Stephen discovered in Acts 7 – Jesus standing to welcome and receive him.

5 amazing truths before lunch, because of who Jesus is.

And we, because of the risen Jesus, our Lord and our God, are an Easter people, and Hallelujah is our song.