Hi,

Today’s update:

* The links to my on-line classes, the video recordings of the classes, the class audio podcasts, and the archive of these daily emails can all be found at [www.scottengle.org](http://scottengle.org/scotts-weekly-classes/). All the postings are up-to-date.
* Don’t forget to [vote for your favorite hymn here](https://www.jotform.com/202296152204042?fbclid=IwAR3PCQD_EW-ScuozGaeQjsT5lUgiu0OGCOfSIa1Sln7cYupvzgqvqOxhsXU).

Is Jesus really the Way, the only Way? Today we come to the sixth of Jesus’ “I am” statements in John’s gospel.

***John 14:1-7 (NRSV)***

**“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.”**

*“I am the way, the truth, and the life”*

After all the tumult in the days after Palm Sunday, Jesus has finally come to the end of his long journey into the mouth of the beast. He has gathered his disciples together for one last meal together. He has washed their feet. And now, only hours away from arrest and crucifixion, Jesus seeks to reassure his disciples. He must go. And they cannot, they will not, follow.

Nonetheless, Jesus tells them to rest their troubled hearts. They can trust him just as they trust God. There are many rooms where Jesus is going, which we often call heaven, and he will prepare a place for each of them. They may not realize it, as Thomas doesn’t, but they already know the way to the place where Jesus is going . . . to heaven.

Jesus is the way to this place: “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” There is no other way, no other path, only Jesus: “No one comes the Father except through me.” Jesus is now unambiguously clear about his identity with the Father: “If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” In other words, when they disciples have seen Jesus, they have seen God!

There’s something very important to notice about exactly what Jesus says. It is not his way that he is talking about – he *is* the way. He isn’t speaking here of living as he lived or loving as he loved – Jesus *is* the way. Just as Jesus is the gateway for the sheep (John 10), he is the path to the kingdom of God. Jesus is the way to God because he is the truth of God and the life of God.

For the last couple of centuries, Jesus’ simple and profound statement, “I am the way . . . . No one comes to the Father except through me” has been endlessly controversial. How arrogant! How exclusive! How divisive! Yet, Jesus’ claim and the early Christians’ claims about him are made abundantly clear in John’s Gospel. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” If this is truly the truth, how could one claim to know God and yet disown Jesus?

When we begin to talk about the Christian truth claims in comparison to other religions and belief systems, the questions always boil down to this: Who is Jesus?

*The only way?*

It is just so important to understand the Christian claim. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Seeing him is seeing is seeing God for he is God. And if we are right about this, then, of course, how could one claim to know God and yet deny Jesus. He is not merely one of the great prophets. He is not merely a great teacher and rabbi. He didn’t come merely to show us a better way of living. Jesus is the incarnation of the one true God, the God of Abraham and of Moses. Jesus has revealed much to us about God that we would not know without Jesus.

With all this, Christians today are left with only a few choices:

1. We could simply shut up and enjoy our own private relationship with Jesus. But, then, how could we ever do as Jesus instructed us: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). No . . . the Christian proclamation of the Good News is meant for the whole world. Shutting up isn’t really an option.
2. We could change our claims about Jesus to make him more “acceptable” to non-believers. Let’s see if we can’t discover a Jesus who is deeply spiritual, but no more than a poor, Galilean itinerant preacher. It really isn’t that hard to construct a Jesus to anyone’s liking. Of course, it wouldn’t really be Jesus, but at least we’d all just get along.
3. Or, we could learn what it is we Christians have claimed about Jesus for most of the last two millennia and then state it boldly and lovingly to all who would hear. The Good News is not exclusionary; it is a joyous proclamation that God has rescued and is rescuing all humanity and all creation.

Our truth claim about Jesus is far too unique to fit with other belief systems. He is not merely a path to God; he is God! Could we be wrong about this? Of course. But I believe with all my mind and heart that we are not. I believe that Jesus the Galilean was truly resurrected on that Sunday morning nearly 2,000 years ago and that belief changes everything. This is something that is knowable, just as it is knowable that Julius Caesar conquered Gaul and George Washington was the first president of the United States.

One caution before closing. Nothing here allows for any us/them mentality or a sense of superiority. Knowing Christ is a gift from God, pure and simple. And it is a gift that I pray will come to all people, if not on this side of the grave then on the next.

In closing, I share with you a meditation on today’s “I am” statement written more than five centuries ago by Thomas à Kempis:

*“Follow thou me, I am the way and the truth and the life.*

*Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no living.*

*I am the way which thou must follow; the truth which thou must believe; the life for which thou must hope.*

*I am the inviolable way; the infallible truth; the never ending life.*

*I am the straightest way; the sovereign truth; life true, life blessed, life uncreated.*

*If thou remain in my way, thou shalt know the truth, and the truth shall make thee free, and thou shalt lay hold on eternal life.”*

‘til tomorrow, grace and peace,

Scott