

Grace and peace from Him who is, who was, and who is to come; for He has overcome the world. Amen.

Let us PRAY: Dear Jesus, by the hearing of Your Word today, we pray, grant us access to the Father that we might dwell with You forever. Amen.

John 14:1-6

1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

4 And where I go you know, and the way you know."

5 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Access to the Father

In the name Jesus our Savior, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, dear fellow heirs of eternal life and all who have access to the Father by faith in Jesus,

Some of our volunteers this week were having difficulty gaining internet access on their wireless devices. We soon discovered that it was likely due to a conflict between the modem in my office and the router in the fellowship hall. By shutting off the router in the fellowship hall we were able to fix the access problem, but then signal strength became an issue. Whether its a phone or a computer, we need to be granted access and we need a reliable connection.

In this week's Vacation Bible School we learned about how God establishes a connection with us and grants us access to eternal life. This week's series, "God Speaks to Us," taught us about different prophets of the Bible. The work of a prophet is to provide us with a heavenly connection. Through the spoken or written word of the prophet, God speaks to us, connects with us, grants us access to heavenly truths. We studied the ministries of Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, John the Baptist, and finally the Greatest Prophet – Jesus.

Jesus is the Greatest because without Him, all other prophets, in fact, the whole Bible is left meaningless. He is “the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Him.” Jesus is the only way to gain access to the Father.

By nature we are disconnected. The Garden of Eden destroyed our access to paradise by the interference of sin. *1 Corinthians 2:9,14 ...as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” ... 14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

The natural man is disconnected from the Father. Our sinful nature gets the signals crossed. We see this day by day – a conflict of interests within us or among us. We are just like Moses in our first lesson. Moses was confronted with the call to share the gospel. Like Moses, we struggle to trust that the LORD will provide the ability to accomplish what He has called us to do. What if I don’t say the right words or don’t have an answer? What if I’m embarrassed? We are like the people of Israel at the time of Elijah which we considered in Tuesday’s lesson. We find ourselves faltering between two opinions. It is much easier to go along with the majority, to fit in with the crowd and not be the odd person out. So we can agree with what Isaiah said in Wednesday’s lesson, “we all like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, each to his own way.” Similar to Herod in Thursday’s lesson, we often choose what is in our own best interest rather than listening to the truth. Perhaps we don’t execute the one who points out our sin, but we do get angry; part of us wants to throw that messenger into prison so they can’t bother us anymore, so we won’t be accused by our conscience anymore.

No amount of effort, maneuvering, or smarts can overcome this conflict. Nothing within us is able to suppress our sinful thoughts and desires and produce what is good in God’s eyes. The source of truth and righteousness belongs to God alone in heaven. So how can we, conflicted, sinful human beings on earth ever access the holiness and righteousness that belongs to God in heaven?

1 “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

Jesus alone grants us access to the Father. “Believe in God, yes; but believe also in Me.”

As we look back on our lessons for this week, let’s consider the situation that confronted Elijah. Because of the influence of idolatry, we find that the people of Israel have forgotten the promises of God and to forgotten His commandments. The people have been led into false worship of a god named Baal. Elijah says to the people “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him” (1 Kings 18:21).

In the realm of spiritual truth, there are only two positions – the truth and the lie. If the God of the Bible, the triune God, is the One true God, then all others are false. And vice

versa. The God of Scripture leaves no leeway for a bipartisan approach toward worship done in His name. That is because the gods of all other religions and belief systems are opposed to the belief system of the triune God. The LORD and Baal cannot be the same God any more than the LORD and Allah. They describe themselves in contradictory ways and save in two opposing methods – the LORD saves by grace (undeserved love) through faith in Jesus, whereas Baal, Allah, and all other idols save by merit.

4 And where I go you know, and the way you know.” 5 Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” 6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

“I AM,” Jesus says. “I AM.” This takes us all the way back to the first day of the week where Moses stood before the burning bush. From the bush the Angel of the LORD declares His name – “I AM.” Unchanging. Jesus is the eternal Son of God – the same “yesterday, today, and forever” as the writer to the Hebrews puts it.

So Jesus was present in our first lesson appearing to Moses with words of deliverance – “I AM the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. I have surely seen the oppression of My people, for I know their sorrows” (Exodus 3:7). He visits you with the same words today – to deliver, to set free.

Jesus was present before Elijah and the prophets of Baal. All other religions and belief systems are held silent, while God rains down the righteousness of His Son from heaven. In the resurrection of Jesus, all other gods have been silenced and God has demonstrated that He is the only true God.

Jesus was present in the Law / Gospel message of Isaiah. We like sheep have gone astray, but God has made His innocent Lamb the sacrifice for your sins so that you are declared righteous before Him.

Jesus was present in our fourth lesson when John the Baptist was beheaded. He is with us in those moments of persecution. He is with us in death.

Jesus is the Greatest Prophet. Through all Scripture, He is the One speaking.

“I AM the way.” The way to heaven never changes and cannot be taken away. Not by works of our righteousness, but by His precious blood a place has been prepared for you. His death has secured that room in the Father’s house. Faith is access to the Father.

Of course, remember what happened to our internet access. Resolving the conflict we were experiencing was only one of the issues. With only the one wireless access point in my office, a person needs to be within a certain radius to get a strong enough signal. The most reliable connection is to plug the network cable right into your computer.

Besides being granted access to the Father, God has provided a reliable connection. He has provided a means to “plug in” to this grace in which we stand.

“I AM the truth.” God has revealed truth through His Word. The Word of truth is the most reliable connection to God you will ever know. Your emotions cannot be trusted. They are a reed shaken by the wind, up one day, down the next. Your works cannot be trusted. All the leaping and self-sacrifice of 450 prophets could not conjure up an answer from Baal. Your finances, your good fortune, your friends and family – even your own pastor – in all these examples we find a wireless connection that is not strong, that is not fully reliable; we find a connection that will give us errors.

And so our memory passage for this week was – “the Word of the LORD endures forever” (1 Peter 1:25).

The Word connects us to Jesus which gives us access to God the Father.

This is the place that Jesus has gone – that where He is, there we might be also. Jesus has gone into the WORD to grant you a connection with the Father. The words of the prophets are more than mere sounds, syllables, and sentences. The WORD is Jesus dwelling through the Spirit. “I will come again to receive you.” And it is through that WORD that God sends us that Spirit to convict and convince us of that truth. Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit through the Word that we might have faith. The Bible is a “faith to faith” conversation with God. When a prophet speaks, when your pastor proclaims Jesus from the pulpit, when you study the Word or have a devotion at home, God is establishing, strengthening, and protecting His eternal connection with your soul – all through the Word.

Jesus goes on in chapters 14 and 15 –

John 14:21–24 21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?” 23 Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. 24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.

The world does not know this way, but you do. The word together with the waters of baptism and the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper are the way that you know.

And so Jesus can say, unchangeably, “I AM the LIFE.” He is our life and He gives us Life through Word and Sacrament. By faith we have access to the Father.

Let us go repeatedly to the strongest and most reliable signal – Jesus and His Word. There God speaks to us. There we find an unchanging love that breaks down barriers,

that ends the conflict within and among us. There God keeps us eternally. There our heavenly Father connects us with His grace and forgiveness, and raises us to new joys.

We pray – Father, send us Your Spirit through the Word that we would know and believe in You; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns together with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever, Amen.