

"The Way, the Truth, and the Life"

Living as Light in a Dark World – part 2

John 14:1-14

Good Morning, Church! You might be surprised to see me up here this morning and not my husband, Eric. Since today is one of the days that Eric is preaching in Painesdale, I told him, I'd fill the pulpit here.

So, for those of you who have not met me in person yet, my name is Katja Falker and I am pastor Eric's wife. I know that my name is not the easiest for English-speaking people to pronounce, so here's a little help for you. While my name is spelled K-A-T-J-A, it is NOT pronounced "Cat-sha." It is in fact pronounced "COT" (like the cot you sleep on while camping) followed by a short open "yah."

I am so thankful for everyone that is here in-person this morning to help us make this worship service possible. And I am equally thankful for those of you who are joining us online and helping us reduce the number of people here in the building. While we are longing for the day when all of us can gather again in this beautiful building, sacrificing by staying home and following CDC guidelines keeps all of us safer in the meantime.

I have been very encouraged by the number of people on my Facebook newsfeed who have already received one or both doses of the Covid vaccine. Slowly but surely we are getting closer to the day when this pandemic will be over and we can be together again.

And now, I invite you to pray with me.

Almighty Father, we are here to receive your Word. We know that you have something to tell us today, and we are ready to listen. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to You, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. Amen.

Have you ever had to move? Then you know how much thought and preparation go into a move no matter how far it is, as well as the anxiety it causes. The shortest distance our family has ever moved "was from East Tawas, MI, to Houghton Lake, MI. Eric and I had been married for just about two months

and had been living with his parents while we were looking for a job for Eric. It turns out that getting married a week after one of you graduates with his Masters degree in civil engineering makes for a tough time hunting for jobs. Not to mention that I had only been in the US for a little over two months on my fiancee visa.

Once Eric found a job as a youth and music minister at the United Methodist Church in Houghton Lake, we scrambled to find enough furniture to be able to live in our own place. We had the important things: an upright piano, a dining room table and chairs, and a couch and two armchairs. We went out and found cheap furniture to make sure we had everything we needed. We found a used bedroom set, an entertainment center, and a futon for a price we could afford. The only two things we bought new were a mattress set (the cheapest one we could find) and a desktop computer. Thankfully we had received linens, dishes, silverware, small appliances, and lots of thoughtful decorations for our wedding.

When I read John 14:1-3, I am reminded of that very first move we ever made as a married couple. We prepared a place for ourselves, so that we could start our new life together. Even though we did not have a lot of money, we were able to turn that very first house into a home for us, and for the three babies we were eventually blessed with.

If we can make an empty house feel like home, by adding our own personal touches, how much more comforting must it be when Jesus prepares a room for us? He knows every fiber of our being and every longing of our hearts. Jesus is going ahead to prepare a room for us in his father's house and he is coming back to bring us along with him. All we have to do is follow the path he expects us to travel.

This brings me to the second part of moving. The travel. No matter how far you move, you have to have a plan of how to get to your new home.

Most of our 6 moves as a family have involved multiple trips to our new town, walking through and checking out our new home. For a few moves, we had to actually go and look at houses and pick out the one best suited to our

needs. While all of those make a move exciting and help build the anticipation, our move last summer was the most anxiety-inducing of them all.

Thanks to Covid, we were not able to come to Houghton before our move. Zoom meetings, phone calls, emails, and texts helped us plan our move from afar, but we never had the chance to come here in person to check out the town, the church, or the parsonage. Pastor Chuck sent us pictures, a computer-drawn blue-print with measurements, and a few short videos to help us out, but it still made our trip here very memorable.

Since we all have smartphones now, trip planning definitely looks different from even just a few years ago. We don't need physical maps anymore and can just tell an app where we want to go. The app will then guide us to our destination. There are however still some roads that are hard to navigate, despite an app that tells you which way to go,

I'm sure all of you here in person today, and lots of you online, might have an inkling what I'm referring to. No, I'm not talking about the approximately 500 traffic circles in Marquette and Negaunee. I am of course referring to this marvel of city planning...

When Jesus tells the disciples in John 14:4 "You know the way where I am going," I imagine them getting as panicked as anyone who encounters the Yooper Loop for the first time in their life. It's like they are frantically trying to figure out which lane they should be in and who has the right of way. What is Jesus talking about? Where is he even going? Hancock? MTU? Econo? The Library? How are they supposed to pick a lane? And where in the world is Ontonagon?

All joking aside, the disciples are confused. Thankfully, Jesus clarifies what he is talking about. He explains to them that he is not talking about physical directions, but about a road map to God the Father. In John 14:6 Jesus tells the disciples that he is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through him. The Wesley Study Bible says that "Jesus put his teaching about himself in a nutshell ([v.6](#)): the way to the Father was through him, just as he was also the avenue into the world for the truth and life of the Father. To know him was to know the Father."

Reading on, we see that the disciples are still slightly confused. Philip asks to be shown Jesus' father. Jesus, being the patient teacher he is, again explains further what he actually means. Those who have seen Jesus, talked with him, listened to his word...they have gotten to know him. They have experienced first-hand the miracles Jesus performed. All of those experiences have already shown them who Jesus really is. Jesus is one with God the Father, just as all his words and deeds are guided by God. The two of them are intimately linked.

Jesus then goes on to tell the disciples again, his ministry on earth is coming to an end. Jesus encourages them to follow in his footsteps and carry on the ministry he has started and shown them. Jesus is the great encourager and tells his followers that they can do even greater things than he did, as long as they do it in his name. I love the way the Message Bible translates John 14:11-14 -

"Believe me: I am in my Father and my Father is in me. If you can't believe that, believe what you see—these works. The person who trusts me will not only do what I'm doing but even greater things, because I, on my way to the Father, am giving you the same work to do that I've been doing. You can count on it. From now on, whatever you request along the lines of who I am and what I am doing, I'll do it. That's how the Father will be seen for who he is in the Son. I mean it. Whatever you request in this way, I'll do."

Wow! Here, finally, are the directions the disciples are looking for. And because they are written down in the Bible, we can follow them as well. Just like the disciples, we can look back at what Jesus did throughout his ministry and follow in his footsteps.

Here is what following Jesus looks like in my life:

Despite growing up in a non-Christian home, I was raised to follow the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. I didn't become a Christian until I was 19, however, I believe that my parents laid the groundwork for me to follow Jesus.

I try to regularly read my bible and apply what I learn in my daily life. I try to help people out whenever I can, whether that means giving goods, money, or time. Helping someone else has some wonderful side effects. It gives me a good feeling, yes, but at the same time it highlights how well off I am. It humbles me to

be able to give of myself and shows me where our society needs work. Thinking of others gives me an opportunity to fix my attitude when I'm being cranky or selfish.

Sometimes it feels overwhelming to follow Jesus and try to do what he would want us to do as Christians. However, when we meditate on his ministry and look at it closely, we see that taking Jesus' mandate to heart, means loving God and loving our neighbors as ourselves. It is not always an easy task. We all struggle with loving those who hurt us, or those we don't agree with. But when it comes down to it, we must try. Jesus is our guide; he is our roadmap. When we choose to follow him with all of our heart, we always have that map to refer back to. Even when we inevitably stray off the path he showed us, we can get back to it, if we just take the time to look and consult the map. We can always go back to the wonderful question of the 1990s: WWJD - What would Jesus do? Pulling out our bibles and consulting it to realign ourselves is always good practice. The truth held within Jesus' words will bring us back to the path to God and to eternal life. Jesus truly is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Through him we will find God and be adopted into the family - no moving trucks, packing boxes, or navigating Yooper Loops required.

Let us pray.

Everlasting God, you gave us the faith of Christ for a light to our feet amid the darkness of this world. Have pity on all who, by doubting or denying it, are gone astray from the path of safety. Bring home the truth to their hearts, and grant them to receive it; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

"Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can."

— John Wesley

Memory Verse: John 14:6 (NIV)

"Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Reflection Questions:

1. When you are lost, how do you find the right direction to go?
2. Why is it important to know the truth? How does deception hurt us?
3. What is the most important aspect of life? How do you treasure it?
4. How is Jesus your Way, your Truth, and your Life?
5. How can you share what Jesus has done for you? With whom will you share it?