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Sermon preached by Mr. J. K. Popham
on Sunday evening, 26th. December 1926

Text: John 14 v. 6

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the
truth, and the life: no man cometh
unto the Father, but by Me."

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It is a solemn thing to be living; a solemn thing to have to do with the things of God; a solemn thing to be surrounded by providences which may be painful or pleasant. In either case it is very solemn, and it is solemn to believe that we must needs die; a great, a repugnant truth, - repugnant to nature. Some providences are arresting. One such providence, has, if one may so say, occurred here. Though very few of you may have had any knowledge of them, there were two sisters, one of whom, when able, always came, but has not been able to attend now for some years, died yesterday, and the other one died today, and there is reason in those of us who knew them to believe that both of them are absent from the body and present with the Lord. For them, what a blessed change. A week ago tomorrow, I was at the house and the one who died yesterday was so ill I could not see her and the other was almost too ill to stand and speak, and now both of them, we have reason to believe are in heaven. What a blessed change. Now should this circumstance move any of us to consider our latter end and cry, -

Prepare me, gracious God,
To stand before Thy face;
Thy Spirit must the work perform,
For it is all of grace.

In Christ's obedience clothe,
And wash me in His blood;
So shall I lift my head with joy
Among the sons of God.

it would be a mercy. Many are afflicted; many of the members of our congregation and some of the church are afflicted. Others are absent from home, and we thus notice their vacant places. May the Lord look on us and sanctify to us His dealings, His solemn providences, and grant that we may be benefited by the things we pass through. These things, where the fear of the Lord is, will have an effect; be as a voice to us saying that as we know not what a day

may bring forth, and as there is evil abroad, and further, as solemn judgments are in the earth and in this nation, may we be among those of whom Solomon speaks, "A prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself:" and where can a sinner who foresees evil hide himself but in the Lord Jesus who is that "secret place of the Most High;" that "shadow of the Almighty," in and beneath which the saints are safe? O my friends, you can't be right, absent from, separated from, ignorant of the Lord Jesus, and you cannot be wrong, whatever you may suffer, if you dwell in His secret place and abide under His shadow. Days are passing, soon will this year expire. We think of it, we speak of it, as an ordinary event. Years roll by, and perhaps we seldom consider that they take us along with them; that we are hastening to eternity. It were well for us to ask ourselves this question: we are hastening to eternity, are we taking any real steps toward heaven? If so, what a favour. If not, how solemn is our position. We must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. By that blessed Man, God will judge the quick and the dead. What will He say of that man? He will give charge to His servants thus: 'Bring forth that enemy who would not that I should rule over him. Bind him hand and foot. Cast him into outer darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, and their worm will never die; the fire will never be quenched.' May the Lord make you consider this, give me to consider this: am I on the side of Christ or against Him? Is my desire that He should reign in me, or would I say to Him in my heart, - am I saying to Him, - depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of Thy ways? Do we prefer our own righteousness before His? "Except," said He, "your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom." Do you feel that the company of the publican would not be pleasant company, that you would rather strut up into the temple with the Pharisee, - if you go to the temple at all? Well, the publican got the blessing. He "went down to his house justified." It is a great thing, a merciful thing to be convinced that we are ruined by the fall of Adam and ruined by our own sin. Do you ever consider that even if you do not utter a word against Christ, yet if there are thoughts in you against Him, He knows them. He said to some of old, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself:" of others He said this: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name." What a line of distinction the Bible

draws between the righteous and the wicked; the living and the dead, the world and the church. On which side of that line shall we be found? What a question for me to put to myself, to put to you. I know you listen to me, you have done it, some of you younger ones, as long as you have lived and have been attending. May the Lord open your ears to listen to me. The hearing ear is God's blessed creation; may He give you such an ear to listen to what He says.

Jesus, in the text, tells us the only way to heaven. He is there. He has gone there to prepare mansions; gone to prepare a place for His people. Would you, in your heart - can you in your heart say, 'Has He gone to prepare a place for me?' Palaces as well as cottages will soon be destroyed; heaven and earth shall pass away and all the inhabitants shall be in eternity; some occupying the mansions prepared for them, inheriting the kingdom prepared for them, and others suffering that worm that never dies; that fire that shall never be quenched. Jesus is the way to holiness. Some people with natural convictions try to overcome sin in this particular or in that particular, but they cannot. Some of you may be in that case and your consciences suffer at times. You may know, you must know, having natural conviction, that when you fall into sin, when you break some promise, your conscience tells you that you have sinned against God. Now should the Holy Ghost come, and work real spiritual conviction in you, then you would be turned, and find yourself turning to Jesus Christ who is the way to holiness. You will never get one single true victory over any sin but by His grace; never possess and feel one true sensation of holiness and love to holiness, but by His grace. The things of God are very solemn; one of them is holiness. Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. Why sinner, if you wash yourself, as Job speaks, with nitre and much soap, your iniquity remains, your pollution continues, but the blood of Jesus Christ makes a sinner to whom it is applied, holy. "Jesus, that He might sanctify the people, with His own blood, suffered without the gate." That blood can cleanse the blackest soul, and wash away each stain. Therefore Jesus is the true way to holiness. He is the only Holy One between God and sinners. His sanctification is the only sanctification that will bear the gaze of God; the gaze of God.... You can see the character of some people more or less distinctly by their words. You can see the character of some, very distinctly by their conduct. What mistakes we may make about people. Much

as we think we see and can see, we may make great mistakes. One whose pride is great, may have a broken heart without telling you that. You may say what a proud person he is, but another with a meek and quiet exterior is a Lucifer in his spirit. Now God sees these differences. His grace alone, can make you right; His grace alone suffices; His blood alone can purify.

He is the way from sin. He is the way from all sin. You will never get away from any sin in your affections, in your will, in your spirit, in your desire, in your design, but by Jesus Christ. He is the way to pardon of all sin, - all sin! O that great word in the Word of God: "All manner of sin and blasphemy ... against the Son of man ... shall be forgiven." It is a great word. I could wish for some of you, bitter though the experience would be, that you might feel so wicked, so full of sin, and so often and always overcome by sin, as to fit you for that word that I have just quoted. I was in that case when a young man, and that word fitted me and came to me and helped me, and turned my eyes in the right direction. "All manner of sin." You may say, 'but my sins are not ordinary.' That is just what I was saying. If my sins were ordinary sins I might hope. O sinner, extraordinary sinner, unusual sinner, uncommon sinner - all manner of sin - sin in your heart, sin in your tongue, sin in your life, sin against God, against Christ, against every good thing, - all manner of sin - atheism, profanity of every sort, bitter enmity of every sort, - all manner of sin - and this is Jesus Christ who can forgive them! He has power to forgive sins. Blessed be His name, He has power to forgive sin. It is a great mercy and a great comfort when brought home to a person that sin is separable from the sinner. Sin is not such a part of a man as that it can never be separated from him. Sin was not in us when we were created and it can be separated from us, and if we are new created it will be separated from us. It may cling to you; you may feel, 'I shall never be rid of it,' but God can rid you of it in the forgiveness of it, and ultimately the being of it. Think of it, O afflicted saint, sin is separable from the sinner, and it will be separated from him in God's time. Sin, our worst enemy before, shall vex our eyes and hearts no more when we leave this poor world.

He is the only right way through affliction, the only right way through affliction. Sin has brought affliction into the world. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble." There is a wrong way out of affliction. When Ephraim saw his

wound and Judah his hurt, what did they do? Ephraim went to king Jareb. (Hosea 5 v 13). There is a wrong way out of affliction. You may have a wound of natural affliction and get it slightly healed in some natural way. Job got out of affliction well. He went in his affliction to God and when he could not get as near to God as he wanted, he said, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat!" Could you say that? There are some here who can say it, and some who could not. If affliction were to come to some of us, God would give us grace to quicken the grace we have, and enable us to say, 'O that we could get near to Him, that we could breathe out our sorrows into His patient, condescending ear. O that we could tell Him that we believe we have procured this to ourselves, ask Him to give us grace, to sanctify it to us.' And when the Lord came, at the right, the appointed moment, Job came well through. The Lord turned his captivity. When you get out of trouble, just see how you get out of it. Enquire how you got out of it - who has brought you out of it. Examine yourselves by that word in the Hebrews, where Paul says no affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. One may say, but I am exercised about my affliction. And what is the exercise? Is it this: to get out of it any way, - as quickly as possible? Then you will have no peaceable fruit, if that is all. Another says, O Lord do not take the burden off without some profit being brought to my soul by it. O may I be the better for it; may I be enabled to say eventually with David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; - before I was afflicted I went astray." Such exercises are heavenward, - Godward, - and very profitable, and the issue is, "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." Many a saint groans under affliction, but the end will be singing; the end will be praising; the peaceable fruit of righteousness is the Lord's smile, the Lord turning the captivity, the Lord blessing the soul, and Christ is all this. He is the way through affliction. "Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." What was that? Why, succeeding trouble. "Thou laidst affliction upon our loins; Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." That is the way through affliction. Creep through it on your knees; pray your way through it as God helps you, and the day will come, when you will say, 'It was good for me to have that trouble; good for me to be beaten down to the earth, and bruised in my spirit;

good for me to say there was no way through affliction but by the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. Dear friends, He is the way through death; the only safe, good way through death. We shall all go through death into eternity; that is certain. O if we should all go through death by Jesus Christ. That would mean heaven, that would mean being in the presence of God throughout eternity. Happy soul who enters heaven according to the scripture, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." Some might be saying, why do you talk about death so much? Because, you must die, I must die. We must needs die, and the one thing is, in this life for the people of God - may it be so with you - to be ready to die, to be fit to die. What is it to be ready and fit to die? It is to be born again; to have union with Jesus Christ; to have all your sins forgiven; to be justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. That is being ready and fit to die; that is being made meet through the powerful working of the Spirit bringing these things in, - meet to be a partaker of the saints in light, and the way to this is Jesus Christ. May the Holy Ghost open our eyes to see this. May He work in us longings for this, for we must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and if we can appear as the Apostle speaks in the Romans, it will be well with us. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Now whether we believe it or not, these things are weighty. My sayings, they may not be the least weighty to you, but these are weighty. These things are the "ancient things" revealed in Holy Scripture. May the Lord lay them in their own intrinsic weight upon our hearts by the power of His good Spirit. "I am the way."

Then He says, "the truth." "I am the way, the truth" What is truth? Blessed things of God. Truth in respect of creation. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." This was His work, and the Apostle Paul in the Hebrews says, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were formed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Out of nothing God created the heavens and the earth. This is true, and creation was by the Son of God. "By whom He made the worlds." Hold fast to this work of creation by God. It will never be obsolete as truth. It may be it is denied

by many, but it is the truth and He is the truth as the Creator. There is nothing in creation that He did not make and frame. He created man. Out of the dust of the earth God made man and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. This is our origin. We came out of the hand of God. He is the truth in this, - the truth of creation. He is the Creator of man. In respect of providence, it is true that He is the beginning and the end; that all judgment, all rule, all authority in heaven and in earth, He has. Nothing moves without Him. Things in our daily life, things in relation to us here and there; things in the church of God; things in the world; matters of business; troubles and disappointments; prosperity and good; these equally come from Him. It would be well if we all believed it. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Shall a young man succeed in his profession or business and God have nothing to do with it? Did He not tell the Jews, it is God that giveth thee power to get wealth? Did He not tell them, because of their sins that He who had made them the head, would make them the tail? Yes, He was in it all, the truth of the whole matter lies there, - in the hands of Jesus Christ. Providence is in His hand. The Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to open the book and when that book was opened by Him, the seals broken and loosed, then there were thunders and lightnings, - providences agitations, - and still it is so. Christ will never be dethroned. Whatever we may wish contrary to His rein, He will never give up the reins. They are in His hands. O sinner, God make you believe it. God make it an acceptable truth to you. He is the truth of the gospel, the whole truth of the whole gospel.

The gospel is called the glorious gospel of Christ; it is called the blessed gospel, the gospel of the kingdom, the blessed gospel of God. The gospel of repentance it is, and the gospel of forgiveness. The gospel by which men are transformed into the image of Him who re-creates them, creates them by His good Spirit. The gospel of life quickening the dead; of light, enlightening the blind; of liberty, bringing prisoners out of their prison; and freedom, delivering them from their bondage; forgiving them all things by which they could not be forgiven or justified by the law of Moses. The gospel of holiness; the gospel of union with Christ; the gospel of the covenant of grace ordered in all things and sure; all providences, all good, all good things concerning the immortal soul. The gospel, this blessed gospel of the everlasting covenant, - the truth of all this is in Christ. Not a single line of truth

will ever be found outside the circumference of the covenant. Not a beam of mercy will ever fall upon the troubled heart of a convinced sinner outside of the Person and work of Christ; not an intimation of good will ever be heard by the spiritual ear of a child of God, that will not be heard from the Lord Jesus Christ who came to bring good tidings of great joy to sinners; not a revelation of Christ, of God in Him, shall there be, without the Holy Spirit revealing His Person in some degree, - the Truth of every promise. Every promise has somewhat of Christ in it; every promise has somewhat of the grace of God in it to those to whom it is spoken. He is the beginning and the end; the Alpha and the Omega of all that is good. O what a gospel this is. It is worth the tongues of angels and yet they could not speak it as sinners can speak it who are made acquainted with it by the Lord. It is worthy of God. It is worthy of God, and the Apostle when preaching it said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." "I am the truth." He is the truth of all the faithfulness of God. That may seem very self evident and yet, let us enquire into it. God's faithfulness relates to all that He has said; all that He has promised; all that He has threatened. His faithfulness in the truth of it, in the fulness of it lies here, in Jesus Christ. In the covenant of grace He is faithful. He will never whisper a word of peace or of the gospel into any of your souls, or into my soul, to which He will be unfaithful. He cannot deny Himself. "The gifts and the calling of God are without repentance." O if we had but faith to regard God as having pledged Himself to us. To us to whom He has spoken His word in Jesus Christ, He is faithful. Men and devils and providence may seem to make the fulfilment of some of His promises impossible, but men and devils and providence, heaven and earth, shall pass away but not His word. "My words shall not pass away." Why sinner, in your state in respect of the promise you are firmer, more stable than heaven and earth, therefore what Solomon says is true, "The righteous is an everlasting foundation." A foundation on which God will build heaven in every saint. And, He is faithful to His threatenings. O if a threatening hangs over any of us, we shall never be able to avoid it. It may be in a providence and we may say, we will get away from this, but we cannot, it will follow us. They said of old, we will flee upon the swift; He has messengers swifter than we are in our movements, - faithful to His threatenings. May

we not be of those who are ordained to punishment, but of those who are ordained to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the truth, my friends, of these things. They are all in Him. Justice is in Him, love is in Him, justification is in Him, mercy is in Him, and every blessing of the everlasting gospel, as to its substance and its durability, He has. They are all in Him. Durable riches and righteousness are with Him. He says He has them to give. What a mercy to be asking for them.

"And the life." The life of all things. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." Life in faith, so that it cannot be overcome. He gives new life to faith, life to hope that it cannot perish, "The expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever." Life to love, so that it shall not be offended, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me." Eternal life He gives to His sheep, "I give unto (My sheep) eternal life; and they shall never perish." So this text that some may think is time-worn, for it is often spoken about, this text is ever new because it speaks of Him, or, He speaks in it who Himself is eternally the Son of God, unchangeable, - "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Should our hearts be gathered up to this; should our minds be fixed on Him who thus speaks, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," it will be well with us. Well while life shall last and well when called to die. O you cannot imagine really, no man can, the full happiness of the people of God, - the full happiness. They themselves must die before they can enter upon it. We get a little here, yes, we get a little here - a touch. O what sweetness there is in a divine touch of mercy. Some of us have had many of these touches and they have overcome our fears; our gloom has been dispersed by the rays of mercy; our slackness has been removed by some sweet view of the fulness of the Lord Jesus and our desires have been quickened to live near Him, as we have seen Him to possess all the life, and all the love, and all the mercy that we can ever need. What a mercy it is to believe this ever-living word, "I am the way." Thomas, you say you do not know the way; why, I, who am with you, am the way; I, who have spoken to you, and am now speaking to you, am the way. You wish to go to where I am going; I am the way to that place. I am the way to your righteousness and to your holiness and to your strength, and to everything that is good. The Holy Ghost being our teacher, takes care that we shall be shut up

to this. He will leave us no other way, no other hope, no other plea, no other happiness, no other hiding place, no other secret place or shadow, - the Lord is thy shade on thy right hand. May He graciously bless us with a sweet expression of this into our souls, - I your Saviour, Redeemer, Lord, Master and Friend, I am your Way. I am the Truth to you. The truth as it is in Jesus. I am the Life of your soul and when you are faint and ready to die, I will -

"... pour fresh life on every part,
And new-create the whole."

May we have an experience of this and also may our afflicted friends partake of it. I trust we shall be able, by the mercy of God to pray for them. "Pray one for another", and may we be particular about this. "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray, ... let him call for the elders of the church;" and they shall pray too. Let the church pray in this way, - so may we find ourselves gathered up to this Person, to this goodness, and to this righteousness.

Amen.

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