



**April 20, 2008**

Preaching: Rev. Eunbae Doh

John 14:1-17

## “I AM THE WAY”

In this passage, Jesus tells his disciples something about the heavenly place. But he doesn't give enough information about his father's house. He just says, there will be many rooms.

Here is a joke which you might have heard before. “A man died and went to heaven. He was met at the Pearly Gates by St. Peter who led him down the golden streets. They passed mansion after beautiful mansion until they came to the end of the street where they stopped in front of a shack. The man asked St. Peter why he got a hut when there were so many mansions he could live in. St. Peter replied, "I did the best with the money you sent us."

I don't think heaven will be a place like that, depending on how much money we give. My son Joshua has a lot of question like many other kids who are full of curiosity. One day he asked me a question, “Dad, what does heaven look like? I said, O, it's going to be a great place. And I tried to describe what the Bible says about streets of gold, and mansions for every person, as told in Revelations. God sits on a great white throne surrounded by angels singing praises to him. And Joshua said, “Is that all?” Yes, as far as I know. O, really? It's going to be boring. I don't want to go there. It doesn't have Play Station, toys, and TV!! So, I said, “Josh, I'm so sorry. Actually, I have no idea what it looks like. I have never been there. But one thing I know it's going to be a great place more than you think.”

Nobody knows what kind of place it will be. The great scenes of Revelation, Singing angels, a sea of glass, flowers, gold and silver, are based on the

imagination of ancient people who lived in that kind of culture. At that time those kinds of things were the best things that they could imagine to describe heaven.

So, don't be upset because you don't see anything in the Bible that you desire, like huge shopping malls, beautiful golf courses, Cub's games and whatever.

Giving some detail information about heaven was not the thing that Jesus wanted. We need to figure out the context of his message. This passage is a part of his farewell message. Jesus was preparing his disciples for his imminent departure. They were more than a little confused. He said that he is going to his Father's home to prepare a place for them. Life as God has designed it for us is not confined to this world. The risen Christ has returned to his Father's home to make room for each of us. And he will come back to take us to Father's home.

"I will be going to my Father's home to prepare a place for you." Father's home--when you think of the words or images of a Father's home, what comes to your mind? Father's home, to me is a place where I'm always missing, a place where I want to go back with my wife and my three children, a place where I'm dreaming every night, a place where I have many precious memories with my family and friend who still live there.

Home has a special place in the human heart. It seems we are all longing for a place to call home. Whenever we feel lonely or abandoned, we want to go home. Whenever we are filled with doubt or despair, we want to go home. Whenever we feel cut loose or lost, we want to go home. It is the deepest longings of the human heart. St. Augustine wrote a famous expression to this longing, "***God, You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee.***"

'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. I will go to Father's home to prepare a place for you. What a great promise. He will come back. We will get there together.

But, there are many questions as his disciple Thomas asked Jesus. Thomas said, '***Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way? Lord, we don't know what it is. How are we going to get there?***'

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

This is well known and very famous message. I will call this message "I AM" message.

This is a great message but also contains some of the most troubling statements. When Jesus says, "No one comes to the Father, except by me," we almost always hesitate. You might hear some preacher's message saying, "If you do not "believe in Jesus" you are going to hell." There are so many Christians who stumble over this message. "What about those who are not Christian?" What about other religions? Well, I don't want to spend my time today dealing with this issue.

But I want to remind you that this is not a message for theological argument or doctrinal statement. Jesus was not interested in establishing a clear statement of human salvation. Also, the gospel of John was not concerned with the fate of other religions, Muslim, Hinduism, or Buddhism, as they are configured in the modern world.

But as a pastor and preacher, I'm not going to avoid my responsibility, interpreting this troublesome message. SO, now, let's make your eyes open and wide to the whole context. Think about it. Who was the audience of this "I AM" message? There were two different audiences, First, Jesus' disciples who heard this message from Jesus and second the Christian community in the 1st century who heard this message from Gospel of John.

The first context, Jesus' disciple, this was a farewell message of Jesus before he left to die. Jesus' disciples were confused and scared. They lost direction. The second context was the Christian at the end of first century who struggled with terrible persecution.

Look at that! These two audiences have a common situation. They were frightened, vulnerable and defensive. So, Jesus and the Gospel of John wanted give a message of hope and comfort for their people who were suffering and struggling in that kind of situation.

That's why I keep telling you that we need to figure out the context of the message. Don't take your fish out of the water.

The true meaning of "I AM" message can be understood as we keep such circumstances in our mind.

Let's take a look at verse 4. Jesus said, "You know the way to the place where I am going" What does it mean. Here is a clue. Chapter 13 verse 36, "Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later. That's right! the way in the I AM message was the way to the cross. The way to the cross was the place Jesus went. The way of the cross was the gateway to heaven. The way was the way Jesus disciple will follow.

The way was the way the Christian community in the first century was experiencing.

That's right!!

Do not be afraid, you are not a loser. Your way is my way. Your way is the way of cross that I went. Your way will lead you to heaven. I will go there and you will be with me.

Now, I can conclude that this is a message of great invitation to follow his way. This is a message of comfort and encouragement for those who suffered to follow Jesus Christ with their cross.

***‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.’ (Matthew 16:24)***

Follow me! You will get there with me, my father's home. I am the way. No one comes to the Father except through me. No one comes to the Father except through following my way, taking up cross, the way to the cross.

I wish I can get to heaven after I die. Don't you?

I have no idea what heaven looks like. I don't care about that. But I know how to get there. Following him, isn't it simple? If you want go somewhere, but you don't know how to get there, the best way is sticking to someone who knows the way. Follow him, stick to him, be with him.

That's why I think heaven is not a matter of place but a relationship. Our true home is with God, and Jesus. Even though the fullness of this relationship remains in our future, even now we can know the reality of this relationship. Even now we can experience this eternal home. When we follow the way of Jesus, when we do the works that Christ commands us to do, when we love one another as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, then God's love will dwell in us, then God's love will make a home in us.

There was a little girl who got lost. The little girl ran up and down the streets of the big town where they lived, but she couldn't find a single landmark. She was frightened. Finally a policeman stopped to help her. He put her in the passenger seat of his car, and they drove around until she finally saw her church. She pointed it out to the policeman, and then she told him firmly, "You can let me out now. This is my church, and I can always find my way home from here."

What an awesome story! We can always find our way to home. When we love each other, when we worship together, when we follow Jesus Christ, heaven is yours.

Stick to Jesus, hold him tightly, and follow him. You will get there with Jesus.