

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Easter 5
May 3, 2026
Sermon by Pastor Jon D. Buchholz
You know the way

—John 14:1-11

How do you find your way to an unknown destination? Back in the good ole days we used to use this thing called a “map.” It was printed. On paper. Nobody could figure out how to fold it. If you were going a long distance, perhaps across several states, you would buy a Road Atlas. It was a big book with many maps. You could go from here to New York City without getting lost. Of course, if you did get lost, your options were limited. You could not stop and ask for directions—if you did, you’d have to surrender your man card. You just had to figure it out. Then GPS navigation came along, now we have maps on our smartphones, and Google will tell us exactly how to get to our destination. Today, real men ask Siri.

But how do you reach your destination successfully on this journey called “life”? You can’t say, “Hey, Google! How do I get to heaven?” Actually, you can, but it won’t give you a definitive answer. It will give you an answer based on different religious perspectives, including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Spirituality. But then it may conclude with this note: If you are feeling overwhelmed, please reach out to a spiritual advisor or a mental health professional.

It was a night of intense emotions, that night when Jesus ate the Last Supper with his disciples. Jesus gave his disciples a model lesson in humility, as he washed his disciples’ feet. He gave them a new command: “Love one another. By this all people will know you are my disciples, if you love one another.” He dropped the bombshell: “One of you will betray me.” And Peter, you will deny me three times before the rooster greets tomorrow morning. He instituted Holy Communion, the Lord’s Supper, his true body and blood with the bread and the wine, his last will and testament. And he told them, “I will be with you only a little while longer. Where I am going you cannot come.” *“Do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that you may also be where I am. You know where I am going, and you know the way.”*

Jesus had told his disciples many times that he would be put to death on a cross, but now it was about to get very real. 24 hours from now, Jesus’ lifeless corpse would be lying cold in a tomb outside Jerusalem. But tonight, Thomas asks, *“Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”*

Where is Jesus going? He is returning to God his Father, who sent him to be the Savior of the world. He is going to lay down his life for the sheep and before he breathes his last, he’ll say, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” And Thomas, Jesus isn’t just going to *tell* you where he’s going and the way to get there. Jesus *is* 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.”*

“Thomas, you know the way to the Father, because you know *me!*” Jesus is the Way. The only way to know God, the only way to meet God, the only way to be received and welcomed by God is through God the Son, Jesus Christ. There is no other way. Jesus, God in the flesh, is the only human being who ever lived an entire lifetime without sinning. He was conceived and born sinless, he always kept the commandments, he always obeyed his Father perfectly. He is the only human being in history who is sinless and perfect, so that he became *our* righteousness in him. Jesus, God the Son, is the only human being who could and did offer himself as the perfect, innocent sacrifice for sinners, perfect blood shed as the redemption price for the sin of the world. Nobody else has ever done that. Nobody else can do that. Jesus is the Way to the Father because with his atoning sacrifice for sin—we call that his *propitiation* for sin—he has removed the barrier of sin that keeps us from getting to God. He has washed away our sins, so that the path to the Father is clear. Jesus is the Way to the Father. There is no other way.

Jesus is the Way because Jesus is the Truth. He is Truth personified. Every word from his lips is true. Every word of warning he speaks is true. Every call to repentance is true. Every promise of forgiveness is true. Hold onto Jesus, continue in his teaching as his disciples, and you will know the truth, and truth will set you free. Apart from Jesus there are only half-truths and lies. Deceptions that promise access to God but end up not with the Father but in outer darkness. These lies come from Satan, who loves to murder souls to see them plunged into eternal fire. Yes, hell is real—Jesus says so—even though Satan tries to convince people it’s not. Jesus is the Truth; Satan is the father of lies. Jesus is the Truth; his Word is truth; his teaching is truth. Cling to Jesus and his teaching, and cling to the Truth!

Jesus is the Life. He gives life, and he *is* Life because he is God and God is life. He holds in himself Life itself. Not too many days earlier, in a village about two miles from Jerusalem, Jesus had illustrated this in a powerful way. There in the little town of Bethany, Jesus had comforted the grieving sister of Lazarus, a friend who had become ill and died. He said to Lazarus' sister Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." Then he went on to prove to the astonished onlookers that he is the Life, when he said, "Lazarus, come out!" and the dead man came out of the tomb very much alive. He showed that very fact on the third day after his crucifixion, when he was raised to life, burst forth from the tomb, and showed himself to his disciples risen from the dead.

Here's a powerful picture. We all know people—friends, neighbors, co-workers, relatives—who are going through this earthly life without Jesus. They look very alive—they're energetic, fun-loving, ambitious, successful—but without Jesus they are spiritually dead, perishing in their sins. They don't have forgiveness, life, and salvation; those things are only found in Christ. They're spiritual zombies, walking dead, alive on the outside but dead on the inside. Lost, blind, perishing in darkness, and heading for outer darkness, eternal darkness. I told you it's a powerful picture—a sobering picture, a dreadful picture of an earthly existence without a Savior, without Life.

Jesus is the Life! He sends his Holy Spirit to fill us with life. We were once dead in sin, completely lost, blind, helpless, and hopeless, but God, who is rich in mercy, filled us with life. He made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions and sins. It is by grace you have been saved (Ephesians 2:1-5, selected verses). Jesus brought you to life, gave you life, filled you with life, so that you can enjoy an abundant life with him.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, by God's immeasurable, incomprehensible grace—his undeserved love—you know the Way. You know Jesus. He is the Way to the Father. He is preparing a place for you, and he will come back to take you to be with him. Real men don't have to ask Siri how to get to heaven. Real men seek Jesus. Real men and real women follow Jesus. Real men and women love Jesus. Live each day in humble repentance, turning away from sin, and celebrating the abundance of forgiveness you have in him. You know the Way to heaven. The Way, the Truth, the Life—that's Jesus Christ, the Son of God, your Savior! Amen.