

JOHN 14 : 6, 13-14

**WHATEVER YOU ASK IN MY NAME . . .**

*I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. . . . And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name I will do it.*

Do Jesus' words sound too good to be true—"Whatever you ask, I will do for you"? You have learned more and more as you grow older and older to be skeptical of outlandish statements---whether it is the ads on TV for super-soap, or the phone call seeking to interest you in Prime Star Highest Paying Investments, or an e-mail for Heal-Anything-and-Everything super pills, or promises made in an election year. One becomes quick to doubt outlandish and even not so outlandish claims. Is that where Jesus' words are this morning---just an attention grabber, just a come-on gimmick? You have tried Jesus' words, haven't you? You asked that it rain soon, or not rain so much, or no hail, or that you don't get sick, or that son or daughter not hit a deer. And just the opposite has happened.

These words don't seem accurate, do they? Yet words to this effect are found in the Bible six different times in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John---all spoken by Jesus. Plus there are Old Testament passages such as "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me" (Psalm 50:15) and other similar verses. Does it sound like Aladdin's Lamp with the genie and three wishes---a fable? ? What shall the Bible believing Christian make of these statements? Is God exaggerating? Is Jesus just trying to "sell" us?

Look at the setting of this statement, *And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name I will do it.* These words were spoken as part of Jesus' long words of discussion with His disciples after the Last Supper in the "upper room" (it was the Passover Feast), on what we call Maundy Thursday evening. Jesus had washed the disciples' feet, the meal had been served, Judas had been pointed out as the betrayer (although the other disciples didn't get what that was all about), and Jesus had instituted the Lord's Supper. His long and serious words with His disciples were in that upper room and then continued at the Mount of Olives (John 13:31-38, John 14, John 15, John 16, John 17). Jesus told them He would be leaving soon and they could not follow until later. Thomas asked where He was going and was wondered how they should know the way to get there. That is when Jesus spoke the first words of our text: *"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man comes to the Father except through Me"*

Jesus was not talking about His being a physical road to get one to a geographical location. He was talking about entering the Father's kingdom of forgiveness, righteousness, life after the grave, and life forever in heaven---all through faith in Him. Jesus was talking about establishing a spiritual relationship with the Father---a relationship in which the physical body also shares. Jesus is the way to heaven. There is no other way.

Christ IS the sure and only way to heaven. He faced and satisfied the Father's anger against you for each day's sins. Please don't feel that this is just another weary and dreary repeating of what the pastor talks every week---forgiveness in Jesus the Savior. You can't hear that too much! But your sinful nature doesn't want to hear it or believe it. Jesus is the only solution to all the muck and mire in your own heart and life---Christ the crucified and risen Savior. Trust Him for forgiveness. He is the Way!

He is the WAY, because He is the TRUTH. There is no lie in Jesus---or in the Father or Spirit. God is Truth. His Truth is Reality. What is the Truth and Reality Jesus brings to you? First, that you are in trouble on your own. You have crossed the line. Like Adam and Eve, with fear and despair, you have to hide when God comes. YET there is another Truth. Jesus has taken the wrath of God for you. In Christ---only in Christ---you are cleared of all your guilt before God. What guilt??? Consider: How many times have you treasured earthbound things more than God? Isn't it, "Everyday"? It is. Now, big trouble. Yet in Jesus, God's "mercy is new every morning; His compassions fail not" (Lamentations 3:22-23). At the cross, both Truths meet. Sin and the wrath it incurs brought suffering and death to Jesus. Yet He gave Himself in love, to effect forgiveness! Sin and forgiveness meet at the cross. Jesus is the Truth.!

Because Jesus is the WAY and the TRUTH, He is likewise the LIFE. Instead of Death we are granted Life, new spiritual Life already now, new physical Life from the grave at the Great Resurrection, and eternal life for body and soul in heaven. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. In Him and in His Name you are allowed into God's family and kingdom.

The verses, which I did not include in the text (vv. 7-12), explain how Jesus made it very clear that seeing Him and knowing Him as the Way, Truth, and Life, means seeing and knowing the Father also. Jesus has come to earth in keeping with His Father's will and to serve to the Father's glory. The Father speaks to us through the Son. The Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father. We know and grasp the Father when we cling to His mercy in His Son.

Thus it is that Jesus continued, *And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name I will do it.* Jesus put it this way a bit later, *Whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you (John 16:23).* But it seems like such outlandish promise! The key to understanding that statement and phrase are the words "in Jesus' Name." To ask "in Jesus' name" is not simply saying the three magic words, and then "There, You hear me say it, right? Now You have to grant it." It's not like Aladdin rubbing the lamp and the genie granting three wishes—free picking, open-ended, whatever-you-want wishes. Jesus' "name" is more than just the letters—J-E-S-U-S. Jesus' name—like your "name" -- also is His reputation. (Do you have a good name in the township/county/ community? Or a bad name? ) What is Jesus' reputation? ---- He reaches out in love to save sinners. He gave Himself to punishment and death in our place. Through faith in His substitute SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF (vicarious atonement), you have forgiveness. Christ is your Redeemer and Savior.---- That is His Reputation.

When you bring a request "in Jesus' name," it honors Him and the Father who sent Him. If you come to the Father or to Jesus to ask for something hurtful, harmful, sinful, detrimental to self, selfish, or harmful to others—physically or spiritually—you are not really asking in the name of Jesus, the Savior from sin and Satan. Such a prayer is asked in opposition to Jesus' name and will not be acceptable to the Lord. On the other hand, when one asks for forgiveness, closer attention to the Bible, care and true love for the eternal souls of others, etc. you are indeed asking in Jesus' Name. He will hear and answer. Guaranteed!

When you bring prayers for physical items—a different house, a different job, a different car, or pick-up, or tractor, a new baby, return of physical health, it's difficult to know if the request is in fact God pleasing. Thus we pray, "Thy will be done." "Lord, in Your love and mercy, wisdom and power, which direct Christ's Kingdom and our lives, You know what is right and best for us and the world. Please, Your will be done. I bring this request, not in my name, but in Jesus' name."

Praying in Jesus' name can be done without saying "in Jesus Name"; because the thought "in Jesus' name" is the underlying approach of Christian faith. Did Jesus include the words "in Jesus name" when He taught us the Lord's Prayer. No, but the concept is there. Consider: God the Father is your Father through faith in Christ. "*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus*" (Galatians 3:26). God is not your loving Father just because He made you. Those who reject Him were made by Him, but will be damned. In Jesus, God is your Father and your salvation.

Can an unbeliever offer a prayer in Jesus' name? An unbeliever can mimic a prayer to the Triune God and also use the words "in Jesus' name," but without clinging to Christ as Savior, the Father does not receive that prayer. That prayer is not offered in faith in Christ. "*Without faith it is impossible to please God*" (Hebrews 11:6). God certainly knows what the unbeliever prays for and may actually grant that request, but for His own reasons and for the good of His kingdom, not because—as Jesus promised to the believers—*Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name I will do it.*

By faith or trust in Him, Jesus is your Way, your Truth and your Life. Speak from your heart to the Father and go to Him regularly and confidently. He will not turn His sheep away or act to their harm. "Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and you shall find. Knock and the door will be opened unto you. For everyone who asks, receives. He that seeks, finds, And to him that knocks, the door shall be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8). *If you ask anything in My name I will do it.*

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach--