

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14: 6

A novel called *The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon* tells the story of a nine-year-old girl named Trisha who gets lost while hiking part of the Appalachian Trail. This work of fiction paints a memorable picture of something many of us can relate to—the feeling of being totally lost.

Here's a portion of it: *"There was going to be a fuss, maybe a big one involving game wardens and the Forest Service, and it was all her fault. She had left the path. This added a new layer of anxiety to her already disturbed mind and Trisha began to walk fast, hoping to get back on the main trail before all those calls could be made, before she could turn into what her mother called a Public Spectacle. She walked faster and faster, waving at the swirling clouds of mosquitoes, no longer bothering to skirt clumps of bushes but simply plowing straight through them. She listened and called, called and listened, except she wasn't listening, not really, not anymore. Her giving way to panic wasn't sudden, but weirdly gradual, a drawing in from the world, a shutting down of her outward awareness. She walked faster without minding her way; called for help without hearing her own voice; listened with ears that might not have heard a returning shout from behind the nearest tree. And when she began to run, she did it without realizing."*

That paragraph captures the numbing panic that being lost can create. And I'd have to say that "numbing lostness" is a pretty good way to describe human beings, when we stray from the path that God has set for us. Most people at least sense there is a right way to go; a right way to live; and when we wander off that path, certain things begin to happen. When I disregard God and his Word and live by my own rules, I've stopped listening to the only One who knows the right direction. Are you on God's path? Or are you still blazing your own trail, getting more isolated all the time?

What is the way forward? That question was bothering Jesus' disciples in today's gospel reading. Together for the Passover supper, they knew there was growing opposition to Jesus. It was becoming more and more difficult to be one of His followers. And now Jesus starts talking about leaving them! He said:

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. *I am going there to prepare a place for you.* And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place I am going."

The disciple Thomas found no comfort in these words. They seemed to raise more questions than they answered. So he spoke up, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

How can you know the way? How can you find direction in life? The words that Jesus spoke to Thomas are also directed to you: Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life."

Now, these words may not have been immediately helpful to the disciples gathered there at the Passover table; and they might not seem immediately helpful to you. You might be looking for a

map with more explicit directions; a spiritual GPS that tells you when to turn left or right. But instead of a device that plots out each move for you, you have something much better. You have a guide who personally goes with you; someone who knows the way so much, He is the way. Jesus is the way. Your destiny is tied to a person. Your route is wrapped up in your living Lord, not some to-do list. Jesus does not show you how to find the right way; He takes you there. He paid for your sins on the cross and passed from that agony into resurrected glory. Your life is bound to His. You are tied to everything Jesus is. As He takes you His way, your life is going to look more and more like His.

Practical question. How did this happen? How did you get bound and tied to Jesus? (This is an especially important question for Michael as he makes his confirmation today, but it applies to everyone here.) The answer is baptism happened. We believe—as Scripture teaches—that baptism is an adoption. God commits to you in baptism. He brings you into the family, and treats you with the same love with which He loves His own Son. To make one's confirmation (as Michael is doing today) is to say "yes" to all this. It is to return the embrace of God. It is to live as someone beloved of God because Jesus is beloved of God and you are united to Jesus in baptism and faith.

And if you are united with Jesus, His compassion will be mirrored in you; His faithfulness will be mirrored in you; His passion for the truth will be mirrored in you; His servant mentality will be mirrored in you; and other people will see it. Do they? Not perfectly, of course, but in some way your life will reflect the goodness of Jesus to others. Jesus is the way to live.

There's another sense in which Jesus is the way. He is the way to your ultimate home. Remember, He said, "I am going to prepare a place for you." As you walk in the way of Jesus, that place is your destination. The whole point of Jesus stooping down to our level, preaching, healing, suffering, dying, rising, ascending and ruling is so that, one day, you can take your place in the heavenly house of God. This is the journey you're currently on. Jesus is the way, and He will see you home.