

## "What Kind of Stick is This?"

John 14:6

The Sermon for the Confirmation of  
Stephanie Lucke - Elizabeth Russell - Stewart Russell

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Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Emmett, Idaho  
Pastor Michael L. McCoy

Grace, mercy and peace to you in the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

Dear Liz, Stephanie and Stew,

The Gospel Reading for this Sunday has one of the most beautiful Gospel proclamations ever spoken by Jesus, our Redeemer. Sadly, this same part of God's Word is also one of the verses most mis-used. Please listen to John 14:6 with the following question in mind ...

... "What Kind of Stick is This?"

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

In order that your confirmation sermon may be one that is memorable; that is, one that you do not forget, consider the fact that, on May 1, 1885, Rev. Dr. C. F. W. Walther, in his 26th evening lecture, stated in Thesis XV: "In the eleventh place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the Gospel is turned into a preaching of repentance." Now Elizabeth, Stephanie and Stewart, it should be noted that this thesis rightly follows Thesis V which was part of his 9th evening lecture of November 21, 1884 during which Dr. Walther stated that the grossest confounding of Law and Gospel occurs when Christ is represented as a new Lawgiver and the Gospel is turned into a doctrine of meritorious works. Got it?

But, wait a minute. That simply isn't going to get the job done here this morning. Let's try a better illustration. Okay, how about this? Here is a John 14:6 stick. Do you see the pointed end of this wooden sword? At the other end, here ... where my hand is holding the sword is the hilt. Do you see that? It's a sword stick. Now, what makes it a John 14:6 sword stick is that I have taken a red marker and written "John 14:6" along the blade portion of the sword. Do you see written here? But what kind of stick is this?

Well, let's imagine that you have a hundred chickens and that there is a small door in a chicken coup located a mile away. Your task is to get those chickens through that small door all safe and sound.

How are you going to do it? Well, why not take your John 14:6 sword stick and begin waving it at the chickens. Chase those chickens and point your John 14:6 sword stick at them. Threaten them with it, holler out the words of John 14:6 and drive those terrified creatures through the small door and safely inside?

It won't work, will it? You know what would happen. If you got them anywhere near the general vicinity of the door those terrified chickens would scatter and you would have to run here and there. With increasing frustration and anger at these foul creatures, you yourself would end up running around like a chicken with its head cut off.

But you know that we're not really talking about chickens this morning; it's about people ... not a hundred of them, but billions. And the place that they need to be is not a chicken coup; it's a place called Paradise - heaven - to be with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit forever. People are scattered across the face of this earth and the Lord wants them to be with Him now and be with Him forever - to be with Him in His Church now and be with Him in His Church forever.

In order for that to take place for you, for all these people here and for all those people outside the walls of the Church as well, God the Father sent His Son to be the Way from this land of daily death to the place of eternal day. No one could get there on his or her own, for the Bible tells us that "none is righteous, no not one" (Psalm 14:1). "No one does good, not even one" (Psalm 53:2). Jesus was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary in order to be the Way. He was obedient to His mother and His foster father. Jesus lived under and fulfilled His own Law in being the Way. Jesus died on the cross for the sins and the sinfulness of all people in being the Way for the world. He rose again from the dead and remained the Way of Life. Jesus ascended into heaven to prepare a place for you in His Father's House. He speaks His promise to His people when He says, "And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the Way were I am going" (John 14:3-4).

Stephanie, Stewart and Elizabeth ... you know the Way for you have heard this account of your Savior for many years. You first heard it when you were brought to the Baptismal font where the Holy Spirit gave you the gifts of faith and of forgiveness, eternal life and salvation. Since that day you have been kept by and in the Way. You have been told and taught ... you believe and confess that Jesus is the Way and that no one comes to the Father except by Jesus. That is Good News, for you don't have to wonder about the Way as you wander upon this earth in your life. You see, this is not a John 14:6 sword-stick to prod and poke you, or to beat you and force you to go through the Door to heaven. In fact, this is not a Law-stick at all, but is God's Gospel for you. If I turn it upside-down you see that it is a cross ... a John 14:6 cross.

Jesus, Who is very God of very God, has said that the He is the Way and what He said is the truth. This is the Word of the Lord, and His Word, both the Bible which is the written Word of God, and Jesus Who is the Incarnate Word of God, is the Truth. The Truth is that Jesus is the Way and that no one comes to the Father except by the Son. That is Good News, for you don't have to go searching for the Truth because the Truth has already found you. The Truth has said, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are Mine" (Isaiah 43:1). You see, this Word of God is not a John 14:6 club to threaten you with hell, or force you to bend the knee, or compel you to confess that Jesus is Lord. The truth that no one comes to the Father except by His Son is the Good News of the John 14:6 cross for you and that's the Truth.

Therefore Jesus is Life itself, by Whom all things were made "and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men" (John 1:3-4). In this land of death and time of bitter tears, the Son of God came to lay "down His Life" (John 10:11) and in doing so declares, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he who believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26). That is a question that we all ought to answer ... whether a few days after a loved one has died as was the case with Mary when Jesus asked her, "Do you believe this?" or on a confirmation day like this. "Do you believe this?" The faithful reply to our Risen Redeemer is, "Yes, Lord; I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, He Who is coming into the world" (John 11:27).

"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this Book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have Life in His Name" (John 20:30-31). Liz, Stephanie and Stew ... you were given Life when you were baptized in the Name of Jesus, that is, "in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:20). You continue to have Life in His Name by hearing His Word of forgiveness, eternal life and salvation, and this is the Way, the only way to the Father ... the only Way to Paradise. What wonderful Holy Week news this is about Jesus Who is both Christ the Victim and Christ the Priest. The Easter triumph and the Easter joy is that Jesus is alive ... He lives ... He is living ... He is Life!

"And since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the Blood of Jesus, by the new and living Way which He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, and since we have a great Priest over the House of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He Who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:21-25).

You have Life because of Christ Who is Your Life. You have the Truth because Jesus is the Truth. You have the Way to eternal Paradise because Jesus Christ is the Way to the Father. This is the Word from the Cross that comforts, not the Word of the Law that accuses, threaten and prods like a sword. This is the Gospel and it is given to you in a world of death caused by the big lie, namely, the lie that there is another way. This is nothing new.

Long ago, the Lord spoke through Solomon the Preacher who declared: "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death" (Proverbs 14:12). The way to death is any way that is not Christ crucified for the sins of the world and Jesus risen. Sadly, there are many former believers in the Lord who have departed from the Way and the Truth and the Life. This is nothing new. Long ago, the Lord spoke of this through Paul the Apostle who wrote of such men, that "they exchanged the Truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, Who is blessed forever" (Romans 1:24).

This is a scary world we live in, and more so, because this departure from the Truth and this pointing to the wide way of everlasting death too often takes place within the walls of the Church and is too often heard from pastors and teachers who deny the Way, the Truth and the Life. Beware, dearly beloved, there are some who claim membership in the one Church, but who share the world's stage with other gods and who tell you that it's okay and that it doesn't matter. These wicked men

have exchanged the Truth for a lie. There are others, also men who claim membership in the one Church, false sons from within who approve such lies and who staunchly support such liars, that is, "though they know God's decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them" (Romans 1:32).

There are many such satanic sirens and a legion of assorted -isms that will make claims as the way to life apart but there is only One Way to the Father, namely Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God crucified for the sins of the world, yours included. That's Good News. There are many truths claimed by people in this world, and even by false prophets within the Church, but only one Truth that leads to eternal Life and that Truth is Jesus, the Lamb Who was slain for you, is also Risen for you. That's Good News. There are many ways in this world but only one Way that leads to the Father and that Way is Jesus the Ascended and reigning Son of God Who has prepared a place for you and one day will take you to Himself that where He is, you also will be. That's Good News.

For as many days as God grants you here, listen to Jesus, the Truth Himself, speak from the cross as the Way to Life with God the Father forever in Paradise. Listen to the Savior plead for all those who were responsible for His death. "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34). Listen to our Redeemer proclaim to one what is true for all who trust in Him. "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). Stew, Liz, Stephanie and each of you assembled in the Presence of the LORD God this day, may you always remember what the John 14:6 cross is all about ... that you hear with your ears and believe in your soul that you are forgiven in the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.