"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 where I am going."

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

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

It hurts when a loved one dies. Even though we know that by faith in Christ, their souls are in heaven and we will see them again on Judgment Day, we still miss them. That is how we feel today, don't we?

Now consider this passage where our Savior says: Father, I want those you have given to me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. These words are from a prayer Jesus prayed on behalf of all believers. From them we see that he cannot wait till his redeemed children come home to heaven.

When a loved one dies, we feel the hurt. We are lonely. We stand on earth and look up to heaven. But do we ever look at it from Jesus’ viewpoint? He is in heaven looking down. He longs for the day when each of those precious souls that he redeemed can be with him in paradise.

And they are precious. After all, he paid for each one of them. The price was steep. He had to suffer an ugly death of crucifixion to buy our souls back from sin, death and the power of the devil. He had to suffer the fist of God as he endured the agony of our sins. But the price was paid in full, forever. We are free from sin. Heaven is ours.

But we are not there yet - not until we die or Judgment Day - whichever comes first. Then Jesus’ prayer will be answered in full. Then he will have the pleasure of ushering us through the gates of pearl into eternal bliss.

Can we be sure of this? Absolutely. That is why Jesus says: Trust in God; trust also in me. Yes, trust in Jesus and what he has done to win heaven for us. His death and resurrection were not in vain. He did not go through hell and back for nothing. He wants us to be with him. And we want to be with him too.

Jesus has reserved a place for us there. He says: In my Father’s house are many rooms; if were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. Jesus has prepared a place for us in heaven. That is Jesus’ guarantee. He purchased it with his life. That is an expensive price. That is an expensive place - held on reserve just for us. When you think of it in those terms, our home in heaven is the most expensive place anywhere. Jesus has it all ready. He is just waiting for our arrival.

Sadly, not everyone will enjoy those mansions in heaven. When a person dies, their soul either goes to heaven or hell. By God’s grace, we are going to heaven - not because of anything we have done, but because of Jesus Christ and what he has done.

That is why he tells us to trust in him. Why? Because he is the way, the truth and the life. He is our only ticket to heaven. If a person does not know Jesus Christ and trust in him, they are lost. There is no other way to heaven. It cannot be earned by doing good. It cannot be obtained by another savior. There is no other savior. Without Jesus, there is no good news, no heaven, no peace or comfort.

That is the truth. Sadly, many people still believe Satan’s lies. They say: It does not matter what a person believes, as long as he is sincere. Though there are many different religions, most of them lead to heaven. That idea has been expressed so often that we may be tempted to think it is true.
It is not. Wherever that idea originated, it did not originate with Jesus. When Thomas asked him about the way to heaven, Jesus replied: **I am the way.** He did not say: **I am one of the ways or I know the way or I show the way.** No, Christ says there is **no other way but me.** Only Christ can bridge the gulf between the holy God and the helpless sinner. With his holy life, his innocent death and his mighty resurrection, he has assured an eternal pardon for all. Though all other ways are dead-end, Jesus is the way - the only way. To know Jesus is to know the way to heaven.

By God’s grace, John knew Jesus and knew the way to heaven. He knew Jesus had a room for him in heaven. Now he is living in those mansions Jesus prepared for him. He is there because of Jesus. He is now enjoying what we heard John describe in the Scripture reading earlier - **no death, mourning, crying or pain. the old order of things has passed away** for him. He is enjoying the glories and perfection of heaven now.

John looked forward to those heavenly mansions. He was a precious soul to the Savior. He wanted him in heaven. So he saw to that he was made a member of his family through Holy Baptism. He was taught and confirmed in the truths of the Bible. John was not worried or troubled about death. He worshiped and took Holy Communion whenever he could. He was always at our Bible study. He wanted the assurance of forgiveness in Christ. By God’s grace, he was ready.

The season of Lent begins today with Ash Wednesday with the solemn reminder: **Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return.** John knew that. He knew he was sinner who deserved nothing from God. But by God’s grace, John also knew Jesus was the **way, truth and life.** He believed Jesus took all his sins away. He knew his Savior had reserved a place for him in heaven. He trusted the Lord would take care of him as the Lord had done for him throughout his life. God did not disappoint him. Yes, he was ready when the Lord called him to himself this past Sunday.

The death of someone makes us aware of the fact that we are going to die one day too. We need to prepare for our own death and where we will be going when we die. Keep in mind that only those who trust in Jesus will go to heaven. That is why Jesus says: **I am the way. No one comes to the Father except through me.** The only way a person goes to heaven is through Jesus Christ. The only comfort anyone can have in looking forward to heaven is Jesus Christ.

That is something we need to think about now. We know we are going to die, but we do not know when. But that need not trouble us. There is hope and comfort in death. It is found in our risen Savior who assures us: **I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die.**

John was not shy in sharing Jesus with other people, as I know he has done with you many times. He would pass out sermons, Bible studies and devotional booklets all over the place. If John were here this afternoon, I am sure he would tell you what Jesus says in our reading: **Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Jesus.** May we continue to live our lives trusting only in Jesus. Trust in him because he is **the way, truth and life.** That is where our comfort and hope lie today - in Jesus our Lord and Savior. It rests on him because he won eternal life in heaven for John and for us. So trust in him to take care of you now. Trust in him as your sure and only hope of heaven. May God grant us all such comfort and hope for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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