

**Text:** [John 14:1-14 \(CEB\)](#)

**Date:** May 3, 2026

**Title:** “Except”

**Theme:** Jesus’ words in John 14:6 aren’t a boundary to be defended, but an invitation into a whole new life.

## 1

I recognize that in this particular moment in the history of the world

To reflect on any claim of truth feels near impossible

We have so devalued the idea of truth, especially in our political discourse

To the point where it almost seems quaint:

“Oh wait, you actually believe something?”

I feel like most of the world is at the point where our working definition of truth is “whatever you can get people to believe”

That’s truth

Now, I’m fully aware some people would put the gospel in that category too

They’d point to a long history of ways that Christianity has done harm in the world

And in so many of their arguments, they wouldn’t be wrong

I heard someone reflect just the other day – only half-joking:

“If you’re telling me heaven is going to be full of Christians... well, no thanks. I’ll take my chances.”

That will stick with me

That’s why it’s important we spend a few minutes reflecting on this scripture today

Because if that’s what people take away from interactions with us

That “if heaven is full of Christians, they’ll take their chances”

Then we are 100% doing it wrong

## 2

There are so many beautiful, comforting verses in John 14  
Unfortunately, we only really reflect on the majority of them when  
someone has died  
Because this is the go-to preaching scripture for so many funerals

Which is unfortunate  
Because like John 10:10 that we talked about last week  
John 14 isn't a scripture for dying, it's a scripture for living

>The danger the Church faces when it takes a scripture meant for  
living  
And turns it into a scripture for dying  
Is that our understanding gets distorted in the process

We take what should be an invitation  
And turn it into a no trespassing sign

I believe that's EXACTLY what we've done with John 14:6,  
where Jesus says: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life.  
No one comes to the Father except through me."

We've taken a scripture about LIVING and turned it into a  
scripture about DYING  
As though there's no other way of understanding it

But remember – even the disciples who first heard these words  
were like: "What is he talking about?"  
"We don't know where you're going, Jesus!"  
"How can we know the way?"

We've taken a conversation that even the disciples couldn't make sense of

And turned it into a certainty

A point of argument about who is in and who is out

A no trespassing sign instead of an invitation to a party

And so ignored the more important

And more interesting meaning

### 3

We got here because we focused on the wrong words

Somewhere along the way we decided "EXCEPT THROUGH ME"

The definition of who is in and who is out

Was more important than "I AM the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE"

Which is the invitation that Jesus offers to a new way of being in the world

When we take a scripture about living

And turn it into a scripture about dying

The message we end up sending the world

Is that our living doesn't matter

That choice leads us towards hypocrisy and spiritual violence

Instead of spiritual flourishing

### 4

Here's the contrast I'm talking about:

When Jesus says he's the WAY

That means he's the MODEL for how we are called to be in the world

He has made the path  
He has blazed the trail  
And he calls us to walk  
Not only WITH him, but IN him  
In humility, gentleness, kindness

The WAY of Jesus is about how we live  
In Acts, we read that THE WAY was actually the original name for  
Christianity  
>Evangelism was an INVITATION into IMITATION of Jesus' life

Now, contrast this – faithfully walking in Christ's WAY  
with how the Church acts when we fixate on this scripture  
as being about what happens when we die  
When we focus on “no one comes to the Father EXCEPT  
THROUGH ME”

We've been willing to go to great lengths to *force* our faith onto  
others  
Convinced we were acting in THEIR best interests  
While doing them tremendous harm

I think, for example, of what happened in the Indian Boarding  
Schools, run by missionaries in the late 1800s  
Thousands of young Native Americans were separated from their  
people, separated from their families  
and forcibly converted, not only to the white man's culture  
But also to his religion  
With NO humility, NO gentleness, NO kindness

That's NOT the approach we see Jesus take in the gospels  
Jesus persuades, but he does NOT force

>When he says, “no one comes to the Father except through me”  
He makes a bold claim about his unique place in history  
That God has come to earth

But Jesus’ claim is not ours to weaponize against others  
When we turn this into a scripture about death  
About the boundaries of heaven  
Then we feel we have to defend it

But if the scripture is instead about LIFE  
And we as a church actually LIVE it  
THEN it becomes an invitation to something wonderful  
It doesn’t need to be defended anymore  
Instead the fruits of our lives speak for themselves

## 5

When Jesus says, “I am the TRUTH”  
That’s an invitation to allow his truth to work IN us  
To ground the choices we make, and how we live  
His truth has the power to reshape us  
And through us, to reshape the world

So, what does that look like?  
Well, think about the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7  
If we believe Jesus spoke the truth  
And we live out of that truth

Then we choose to love our enemies rather than seeking  
    vengeance  
We forgive instead of holding grudges  
We pray for those who mistreat us instead of lashing out at them  
We do these things because we believe these are the truths that  
    give birth to a better world

When everyone else is calling for war  
The Church isn't afraid to say, "blessed are the peacemakers"  
Because THAT's the truth Jesus calls us to build our lives on

## 6

Jesus says, "I AM the life." "I AM the life."  
I want you to think about this: long before you believed  
And even if you're not yet at the point of belief  
I'm guessing you're here this morning because you are attracted  
to the way that Jesus LIVED

He said: "I am the life"  
And HIS life is the life we want for ourselves

We want to live THAT open-hearted  
With THAT kind of love  
THAT kind of forgiveness  
A Christian can't conceive of his or her life apart from Jesus

When we accept that Jesus is THE WAY, THE TRUTH, and THE  
LIFE  
And we are walking in that  
We no longer feel the need to defend God  
Or to put up "no trespassing" signs

>What Jesus gives us in John 14:6 is not a boundary to be  
defended  
But an invitation – for ourselves first, and those around us  
Into a whole new life

Amen.

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