

FIRST (SCOTS) SERMONS

“A LIGHT FOR OUR PATH”

Scripture Lesson: John 14: 1-7

*This sermon was preached by Dr. L. Holton Siegling, Jr. on Sunday, June 1, 2025
at First (Scots) Presbyterian Church in Charleston, South Carolina.*

John 14: 1-7

Jesus the Way to the Father

1 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And you know the way to the place where I am going.” 5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” 6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

A Light For Our Path

Leader: The word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Some of us have probably had this experience before — especially in the earlier days of GPS. We’d be following directions and hear that programmed voice say, “Turn right,” and so we’d turn right. A few moments later, the voice would say, “Proceed to the route.”

But sometimes that wasn’t possible. If, for example, there was an unknown construction zone, or the road had changed, or maybe there was a detour in place – we couldn’t proceed to the route.

Technology promises to guide us, to make our lives easier, to help us stay on course — but sometimes, even the best tools fall short. And when they do, we’re reminded of just how important it is to have a guide that we can trust.

Well, in our life of faith, we do! For we are given a guide, a compass, a light—and not just any light, but a light that comes from God.

Psalm 119 says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” And Jesus, in John’s Gospel, says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.”

Taken together, those verses help us see that God hasn’t left us to navigate our journey of faith alone. Jesus gave us himself—first and foremost—but he also gave us the Bible, which bears unique and authoritative witness to him by the inward witness of the Holy Spirit.

We read only selected verses from Psalm 119 earlier, chiefly because it is the longest chapter in the Bible, and if we were to have read it all, I fear our core group of Sunday Lay Readers would probably be cut in half.

In total, Psalm 119 is a celebration of God's Word—it is a love song to the Scriptures. And nestled near the center of what is the longest chapter in the Bible is that line: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

I think it is helpful for us to remember that in the ancient world, a small clay lamp wasn't like a modern lantern that can light up a whole campsite. These lamps were small—most of them small enough to fit in the palm of your hand—and they cast just enough light to see what was right in front of you.

It couldn't illuminate everything that was out there, but it was certainly enough to help you take the first steps.

In so many ways, that is how God's Word works. It doesn't lay everything out like a blueprint. To be certain, there are twists and turns we can't see, obstacles we cannot anticipate.

But as far as a next step of faith goes, the Bible—illuminated by the inward witness of the Holy Spirit—gives us everything we need to know how to live and how to love.

And what a gift that is! In a world so full of information, what we need is not more content—we need more wisdom!

We need something that cuts through the noise and helps us understand what is good, and kind, and faithful—what is true. And nothing is more true than the will and intention of God.

That's what the Bible reveals to us. It shows us the character of God: His promises, His justice, His mercy, and His purpose. It grounds us in our truest identity—that before anything else in the whole of creation, we are the children of God.

And with that identity comes the blessed knowledge that in life and in death, we belong not to ourselves, but to our faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. And there's nothing in the world that can change that fundamental reality.

When we know who we are and whose we are, we see things differently. Life becomes less about where we've been or even where we are—it becomes a matter of where we're going. And know this: God intends to transform us along the way.

To be certain, God is still in the business of shaping and molding us, and God does this through the work of the Holy Spirit!

A significant day within the Christian calendar came and went on Thursday—Ascension Day! It is the day set aside to celebrate the moment when the risen Christ was taken up into heaven. Now, sometimes people view Jesus' ascension as the end, but it wasn't the end at all.

It was a continuation—a coronation. Jesus ascended into heaven to assume his place on God's eternal throne, from which he reigns forever.

What we also know from that occasion is that Jesus told us he wouldn't leave us alone. He would send his Holy Spirit to be God's continued presence with us—a very living witness to Jesus Christ. A guide—active and at work in our life and in the life of the world.

We will talk more about the role and function of the Holy Spirit next week, which is Pentecost. But for now, let me simply say that the same Holy Spirit that was at work on the Day of Pentecost is the same Spirit that guides us today and brings the Bible to life!

Hebrews 4:12 tells us, "The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword," which means when we engage with Scripture, we're not just reading an ancient manuscript—God's Word is reading us. It is grasping us. And through that Word, the Holy Spirit comforts us and encourages us—and yes, it even challenges us.

There's a Greek word—*metanoia*—that means a change of heart and mind, a turning away from sin and a turning toward God. It is a word that lies at the heart of the gospel.

Metanoia is also the name of a ministry in North Charleston that our church family has supported for many years.

With help from David and Sharon Ward, Dr. Sutton and I were able to take a tour of their various ministries about a week ago. In fact, you will see in today's announcements the suggestion that *Metanoia* be a potential service project for our Young Adults.

As an organization, *Metanoia* helps people reorient their lives—whether through after-school programs, or affordable housing, or neighborhood leadership—and through their good work, our neighbors are given hope and renewal.

That's not unlike the kind of work that Jesus came to do! After His baptism, we're told that Jesus went throughout the region proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, which, in a word, is also *metanoia*.

Now, while the organization *Metanoia* focuses on helping people to turn their lives around, Jesus is focused—not only on that—but also on helping people turn their spiritual lives around. He invites us to turn from our old life, to turn from those things which the Bible calls sin, and turn to a new life—a life defined by grace and redemption, a life lived in the very promises of God!

We read about one such promise in our New Testament lesson this morning. In John 14, Jesus is speaking to His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion, and He knows that their hearts are troubled.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled," Jesus says. "Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places." He goes on to say, "I go to prepare a place for you."

Jesus then tells them that they already know the way. But Thomas—doubting, honest, searching Thomas—asks a question that we have all probably asked: "Lord, we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way?"

Now, that's obviously not just a path question. It is a soul question. How do we "proceed to the route" when the road seems to disappear? How do we trust when our hearts are troubled? How do we discern the real from the phony?

To all those questions and others, Jesus doesn't give us a map. Here again, He gives Himself. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

When Jesus says that, He not only affirms that in Him, God is truly with us, but He also makes the point that God is the only source of life—there is no other light!

This morning, we celebrated Robby's baptism. And though he cannot yet speak or read or choose for himself, we have proclaimed by grace through faith that God's love claims him long before he can respond in faith. That which God has begun in him, God will be faithful to complete!

We also have the joy today of commissioning some of the students and adults who will soon participate in either a middle school or high school youth conference.

They obviously go with our prayers and our support, but they also go with the Word of God in their hearts. And we affirm and do believe that God's Word will continue to light the path that their feet would go.

Indeed, whether they are in small groups, or worship, or the cafeteria line—and we, wherever our journey takes us—whether we are seeking, or trusting, or returning, or doubting:

Our path may not always be entirely clear, but the light of Christ that has come into the world continues to shine. And for our souls, that light—the Biblical witness, the work of the Holy Spirit—is all the spiritual guidance we will ever need.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.