

When I was thinking about the reading for today, what struck me is that some of Jesus' pronouncements are unambiguous and unequivocal – and some are not!. Just look at the seven great "I am's" in John's gospel:

- **"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." -John 6:35**
- **"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life." -John 8:12**
- **"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture." -John 10:9**
- **"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep." -John 10:11**
- **"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." - John 11:25, 26**
- **"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." -John 14:6**
- **"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." -John 15:5**

Not much ambiguity there!

On the other hand, some of Jesus' stories were designed to leave the listener with something to chew over.

- Take the parable of the workers in the field (Matthew 20: 1-16). While I understand the message, it still seems inherently unfair to me that everybody got the same wages! I'm sure that my union representative would have an opinion on that one!
- And in the parable of the Talents (Matthew 25: 14-30) – was the "wicked" servant really that wicked? After all, he looked after what he was given. He didn't steal anything.

These were surely designed to give you something to wrap your mind around and to debate.

Today's reading from John 14 however .... ***You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.***

I can almost imagine the disciples sitting around listening to Him with their heads slightly cocked and saying "Huh??"

You see, they hadn't quite got the message that Jesus was about to be crucified – and without that little piece of the jigsaw, His comments would have sounded strange at best.

How do you describe something to someone who has absolutely no idea of whatever it is that you are trying to describe to them? How would you describe colour to a blind person? Or chocolate to someone who has never tasted it?

I came across the following video clip recently. The language is Dutch, but the subtitles are more than adequate – and of course body language is universal.

<https://youtu.be/zEN4hcZutO0>

There is no way in the world that anyone could have described to those farmers what they were about to experience. And there was no way that Jesus could have described to His disciples what was about to happen to Him, to them – and to the whole world.

Those farmers had to **taste** the chocolate. Jesus had to be crucified. You / I / they have to **experience** what John Wesley so accurately described as “Feeling my heart strangely warmed”. Words just don't cut it.

Note that, having just tasted chocolate, the farmer didn't sit down and write an ode; or build a shrine; or start a religion. He felt compelled to go out and get his friends, his colleagues, his family to **experience** chocolate too.

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A few months back, Rachel and I were travelling in southern Namibia.

We had spent longer than we ought to have gawking at the Fish River Canyon (second only to the Grand Canyon in size) and we were trying to make up time on an excellent unsealed road. We had not seen another vehicle for at least half an hour and I think we were singing at the time because there was no radio reception. All was tickety-boo. Sorry, we were in Africa. Everything was “hakuna matata”.

We breasted a small rise and on the other side the road suddenly curved, and, on the curve, there was soft sand. Not a good combination when you are doing a hundred! The car started to fishtail and wallow at the same time and I got that hollow feeling in my tummy that amplifies every sway.

It's funny how time slows down under those circumstances and although the whole event probably only lasted a few seconds, I remember three things very clearly:

1. Saying, or at least thinking, several words that I couldn't possibly repeat from up here.
2. Scratching through my grey cells trying to recall an article that I had read decades ago about what one should do under these circumstances.
3. Wondering if I had time for an “Our Father” before whatever was going to happen, happened.

And then ..... the car was stationery - and mercifully still upright - with the dust cloud settling all around us.

There was ever such a brief moment of “nothing” followed by a tsunami of emotions. And the overwhelming emotion was euphoric joy and happiness. We realised that we had just dodged a bullet and that we had been given another chance. Somehow the sun felt warmer, the colours seemed brighter, the air smelled sweeter – and it was so good to be alive. It was, like – Wow!

That feeling is the closest that I have come to replicating the feeling that I felt many, many years ago when I invited Jesus into my heart.

In many ways, God didn't do us any favours when He invented religion. It is not an academic thing. You can't win a debate about it. You can't dissect it. In fact, from the outside looking it, it can seem quite silly really.

Sure, you can reverse justify it, but reaching out and putting that first block of chocolate on your tongue is a heart thing. You have to summon up the faith to put that block on your tongue. You have to **experience** it.

And putting your faith in Jesus is way, way better than chocolate. You should try it.

### John 14:23-29

23Jesus answered him, “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

25”I have said these things to you while I am still with you. 26But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. 27Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

28You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I am coming to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. 29And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.

### Psalm 67

1May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us,  
Selah

2that your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations.

3Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

4Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Selah

5Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

6The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us.

7May God continue to bless us; let all the ends of the earth revere him.