

Rev. Dr. Yugo Suzuki's Sermon

1/16/2011 **"I Am the Way" John 14: 1-7**

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." What did he mean by that?

It means that Jesus is the revelation of God's radically new way of thinking and living. His way is different from what the conventional wisdom of this world teaches us.

What is the conventional wisdom of this world that is neither true nor life giving? For Jesus, it was the value system of the first century Jewish society.

For one thing, it taught that wealth and success were the measures of the worth of human life.

This teaching was cruel to the poor and downtrodden who occupied more than 90% of the entire population. To them it meant, "If you are not prosperous, it is because you have not followed the right path." It meant, "If you are sick, you must have done something to deserve God's wrath."

The second characteristic of the value system of the first century Jewish society was that it divided people by gender and ethnicity.

Men were thought to be superior to women. The gentiles were considered to be defiled and therefore outside the realm of God's love and mercy.

The third characteristic of the first century Jewish value system was that it justified discrimination by insisting that it was the will of God.

In other words, the conventional wisdom of the first century Jewish society taught that God was the God only for the Jews. God was the God only for men. God was the God only for the rich and well to do.

Now Jesus absolutely denied all this. If you follow its way, said Jesus, you will lose your true humanity. You will die.

Contrary to the conventional wisdom of the first century Jewish society, Jesus invited everyone to his table. Jews and Samaritan alike. Men and women side by side. The rich and the poor, the noble and the despised next to each other. The dividing walls of hostility were overcome.

This happened 2000 years ago. What does all this have to do with us? It means that we need Jesus, because we, too, chase wealth and success as the measure of human worth. We, too, fail to question male domination in our society. We, too, often harbor ethnic prejudice.

Who can deny that we need to renounce the wrong measure of humanity? Who can deny that we need to renounce gender division and ethnic prejudice?

Who can deny that we need a God in whom there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, men nor women?

Jesus is the way, Jesus is the truth, Jesus is the life. Yes, indeed! Yes, indeed!