

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

The Way
9.4.2022



THE JOURNEY
CHURCH

SCRIPTURE:

John 14:1-6

INTRODUCTION:

We return to our ongoing series in the Gospel of John. We are starting season 7 today. We will be here for the next several months. One of the issues we are going to look at today is the claims of Christianity that Jesus is the only way to salvation. There are many people today who ignore that claim or dismiss that claim, even Christians, but they are wrong.

Everybody can get things wrong. This summer Katrina and I celebrated our 20th wedding anniversary. We were in South Carolina for student camp. I was preaching, our church's students were participating, but one evening after worship, Katrina and I went into Greenville, SC and ate at a really fancy restaurant. It was so dark inside that I was struggling to see. They rolled your food out on carts. They didn't dare carry the food. When we ordered, I chose the steak, but I also wanted to add some lobster to it, so I ordered it. Katrina told me after the waiter left, you just ordered an entire lobster. I dismissed it, assuring her it was probably just a lobster tail. The guy knew what I meant. But she insisted, I think you just ordered a hundred plus dollar lobster. If you know me, this made me break out in a cold sweat. No way the guy would think I was psycho enough to do that. But sure enough, when the food came out, an entire lobster was rolled to the table, and a man from the kitchen began to get all the meat out from it. I had ordered an entire lobster, the thing was larger than the seat bottom's your sitting in. I was wrong and it cost me a lot of money to be wrong.

Being wrong can be costly. And when it comes to the issue of salvation, and about the exclusivity of Christ, being wrong is THE most costly thing in the world.

Exegesis John 14:1-6

We are in the last week of Jesus' life before the cross. We are entering into a section of teaching that goes into such important topics. Jesus knew his hour had come.

VS 1 -- Why would their hearts be troubled? He just finished telling his disciples that where he is about to go, they cannot follow him. Peter is ready to take on the world, promising that he will lay down his life for Jesus. Jesus tells him that he'll deny him three times that very evening.

So the mood was likely heavy. Jesus is going away. They can't come. Not only can they not come, Peter is foretold to betray Jesus that evening. It would be easy for their hearts to be troubled, to be sunk low. He gives them the remedy: Believe in God; believe also in me.

What does he mean by this? He doesn't just mean believe God exists. He means believe that the true and Living God exists, and because of that, remember who He actually is. This is the Healer, Redeemer, and Savior of Israel. This is the Creator. This is the God who rules over all, and no power or authority can thwart His plans. Take heart. Believe in God. Believe also in me. Notice this, Jesus is equating himself to God with this statement. The kind of belief he is encouraging them to have in God he tells them to have in himself.

VS 2 -- In Jesus' Father's house (His Father is God the Father, and His house is Heaven) there are many rooms. If that were not the case, Jesus could/would tell them. But he knows. How? Because he is from Heaven. His starting point is not Mary's womb, but He's from Heaven. He is the Eternal Word from the beginning (John 1). So he can speak authoritatively about the Father's house and its rooms.

Jesus goes to prepare a place. This is so comforting. His disciples are troubled, but Jesus tells them he's going before them, but he's going to prepare a place for them. Remember, he's going to unlock the doors of death and Sheol. The disciples will not go to the place of the dead, but to the house of the Father. Jesus is going to accomplish this through his finished work at the cross and descent to the dead.

Is Jesus preparing a place for you? This is a question about where you stand with Christ today. Are you in Christ? Do you belong to him? He prepares a place for his people.

VS 3 -- Jesus makes a promise. If he goes to prepare a place for us, he will come again and take us to himself so that where he is we will be. This passage contains within it both the ascension of Christ back to heaven, and the return of Christ back to earth. This is a core doctrinal tenet of Christianity. Jesus, raised from the dead, ascended bodily to heaven where he dwells now (ruling over all things, interceding for us in our prayers). But

he is also coming again, bodily, to the earth. We await this day. He makes the promise to his disciples and us of that return.

VS 4-5 -- Jesus tells them that they know the way. The reason they know the way is because he is the way. He has shown them the kingdom. He has taught them and demonstrated his power and authority. They know the way. But Thomas reflects all of their confusion when he asks, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" This is fascinating. They don't know where he is going. They don't grasp that he is going back to heaven. So they certainly don't know the way to where he's going.

VS 6 -- Thomas's question and statement lead to one of Jesus' most famous statements. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Jesus says "I" am the way, the truth, and the life. He is. Jesus is the way. Jesus is the truth. Jesus is the life. No one, that means nobody at all, can come to God the Father, Creator of Heaven and Earth, except through Jesus.

There's no other way. There's no other road. There's no other path for access to the only True God. Nobody can come to the Father reconciled, redeemed, and adopted except through Christ.

I want you to understand something very clearly. Either Jesus is the only way to salvation and eternal life with God or he is a liar, and Christianity is untrue. There's no other way around it. You can't say "oh, if being a Christian works for you, great." Either it is untrue, and nobody should waste their time bothering with it or it is true, and everybody in the world must come to Christ to be saved.

This doesn't sit well with the kind of world we live in today. Since the Enlightenment period, there has been a steady move towards a dualism of how we view truth and knowledge. Francis Schaeffer likened it to a two-story house. In the lower-story we have facts. In the upper-story we have values.

DIAGRAM: Values



In this view of the world, the lower-story is where we put things like: science, reason, publicly verifiable truths. So in the lower story we have things like molecular biology,

mathematics, physics, etc. The upper-story is where we put things like: religion, humanities (arts), emotions, ethics, socially constructed meanings. Now watch this, here is the underlying assumption about this. The things on the bottom are objectively true and indisputable, and the things on the top are personal preferences, choices, subjective realities.

It is important for you to see this and understand. This is how most people's minds have been formed to think, including most Christians. Truth and knowledge, and how we consider them, gets filtered and processed through this grid. The Christian worldview and the truth claims we declare, which have implications on all of life (including physics, creation, molecular biology, ethics, etc.) gets tossed into the second story and relegated to personal belief. In doing so, it reduces the truth claims to being personal and privatized beliefs, certainly not a lower-story truth that demands attention from everyone.

Do you see the problem this creates? "If Christianity works for you, great. Happy for you. But you can't push that on everyone else, that's just your personal beliefs." Christianity, for most people, is an upper-story, second-story truth/knowledge claim. The statement "Jesus is the only way to heaven" is viewed as a value proposition, not a fact proposition.

Saying Christianity is the only way threatens this dualism, and puts the claims of Christianity and the Christian worldview in the lower-story, forcing people to come to grips with their universal truths.

When we talk about Christianity's exclusive claims, many react against it negatively because we live in a society that believes everyone's beliefs and thoughts should be considered equally valid and true (particularly the upper-story kind). To make an exclusive claim is thought to be arrogant, unloving, and repulsive. Yet, the reason for Christianity's claims is not arrogance, but the truthfulness of the claims. It is no more arrogant for Christianity to say that Jesus is the only way than it is for me to say I am William Erik Reed of Lebanon TN. It's just the facts.

Acts 4:12 — And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Peter makes a bold statement. Christianity's claims are exclusive. Only through faith in Jesus, the only name under heaven in which can be saved. Now, before moving on, buried in both of these passages is the unspoken implication which is spoken of elsewhere throughout Scripture is the reality that man is created by God, accountable to

God, and is at enmity with God as a result of sin. Man has a problem. Left to himself, he stands condemned. Man is separated from God his Maker and in need of a Savior (and a salvation). Hence, Jesus is that Savior. Particularly, Jesus is the ONLY Savior of men. That is Christianity's exclusive claim.

The world Christianity was born into was a pluralistic society (they believed in many gods). The Roman Empire was not bothered by the worship of many gods. In fact, they were not concerned with Christians wanting to worship Jesus. They weren't upset that their gods were being cheated on. Far from that. When the Romans would invade nations they would let them keep their gods. They made no exclusive claim on their religion being the only true one. Their problem was that Christianity DID. From the beginning, the problem the Roman Empire had with Christianity is that it made exclusive claims that Jesus was God, the true and only God. Jesus was Lord, Caesar was not. Jesus was God, Zeus was not. That was their problem. It wasn't the proclamation of Jesus. It was the denouncing of other gods.

The council forbids them from speaking anymore of Jesus and proclaiming His name.

Acts 4:19-20 — 19 But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."

People often say, "**it is arrogant to say Jesus is the only way to God,**" like you believe you have superior knowledge or vantage point to everyone else. Many act as though Christians who believe the teachings of Scripture, that only through faith in Jesus can mankind be reconciled to God and live eternally with Him, is arrogant. However, is that really the case? Is it true that Christians are the arrogant ones for believing this? You see, it may seem humble to say that "**everyone will go to Heaven**" or that "**everyone has a piece of the truth,**" but the reality is that to make those statements is far more arrogant than the Christian. It requires humility to submit yourself to the authority and teachings of Scripture. It is not arrogant to submit your thinking to the Bible's teaching. Arrogance is thinking that you can simply reject the Bible's teachings - without cause or reason - and make yourself the authority to decide and determine who can be saved or what constitutes salvation. That is arrogance.

You see, here's what people today think. If we're humble, then we realize that none of us are smart enough to know everything, so the humble thing to do is to recognize that everybody has a perspective that is at least equal to ours, and really, it's only when we

listen to everybody's perspective that we'll get the full picture. "Every belief system has a piece of the truth." **"Every religion is just a different path up the same mountain to God."**

The elephant parable/analogy: Three blind men were asked to describe an elephant. Each one walked up to the elephant, and touched it, but at different parts. The one who touched the body of the elephant said, "The elephant is like a wall." The one who touched the trunk said, "The elephant is like a snake." The one who touched the tusks said "The elephant is like a spear." The moral of the story is that no one blind man had the whole picture, so they should all be open to what each of the others added to the picture. Each of them was right in what they saw; but each of them was wrong to argue that what they saw was the whole thing. In the same way, the parable goes, no one religion has the full picture. We should be open to other religions, because only then will we get close to the actual truth.

Here's the issue with the parable and what it is trying to teach. **In order to tell the story, you had to see the whole elephant.** The only way to claim that each blind man only saw a part of the elephant was if YOU were not blind and could see the whole thing. Right? That's how you would know. YOU are claiming to be able to do the very thing you are telling everybody else they cannot do.

There is another response Jesus' exclusive claims can provoke: **"religion is just a matter of personal preference."** In this view, people will say, "Well, all religions say the same things. Love people, be good." So whether you believe specifically in Jesus, Allah, Buddha, a gigantic cat named Fester, it's all the same, and that is a private matter. Where does this kind of ideology originate from? It goes back to a philosopher named Immanuel Kant. He taught that all religions are subjectively helpful, but none are objectively true. He often taught about two kinds of facts: objective and subjective. (Illustration: Lebanon, Mt Juliet, Watertown are in Wilson County. If you said "no it's not, it's Grundy County." You could go around and get everyone in the room to agree with you and be against me, but that won't change that I'm right and you are wrong. It is objective. However, if I said "it is hot in here" and you said "no, it's cold," and then I told you you were wrong. I would be thrusting my definitions of hot and cold on you.) For Kant, religion is like the hot and cold debate, it is subjective. It is not an objective conversation like Wilson County. And unfortunately, many people, including Christians, have unwittingly adopted Kant's philosophy into their own way of thinking.

Listen, here's the factual, objective reality. Jesus was crucified for sinners and raised on the third day. You have a choice to believe He is who He says He is, but you can't just shove Him into a group of religions that you can worship if it's your preference.

Remember: **all truth claims are exclusive.** Every worldview holds exclusive beliefs. Christianity is not unique in this. Let me give you examples from the most prominent alternative worldviews to Christianity, particularly here in America at this time:

Naturalism

Naturalism says that there is no God. The universe arose by accident. It means nothing, is going nowhere. Those who believe in naturalism believe it to be EXCLUSIVELY true. They are not open to the suggestion that God created the universe. They are not open to the claim that the order and design is because God fashioned it that way. They would say, "No, that's wrong. We're right," which makes it an exclusive claim, no different from Christianity.

Postmodernism

Here is the spirit of our age. Postmodernism is hard to define, but essentially everything is relative. Authority from an external source (like the Bible) is rejected for our internal authority — our own opinion. Postmodern thinking loves to say things like what we have already explored, **"Just let everyone have their own beliefs and don't bother them."** "Nobody needs to go around telling other people what to believe." But I want you to catch the irony. That statement is doing the very thing it is forbidding others from doing. **"Nobody needs to go around telling other people what to believe"** is, in fact, telling other people what to believe, namely, that nobody should do such a thing. **"Just let everyone have their own beliefs and don't bother them"** sounds nice, until you realize that Christians are taught that there is only one way and they are to share with people the gospel so they can be saved. If the postmodern person really followed what they are preaching to Christians, "Just let everyone have their own beliefs and don't bother them," then they would let Christians have their beliefs (i.e. "Jesus is the way") and wouldn't bother us (i.e. "quit pushing your beliefs off on everyone"). In other words, postmodern folks hold exclusive beliefs too. Anyone who doesn't think like them, they are quick to correct and attempt to get them in line.

The LGBTQ+ community does the same thing. They not only want to be able to have their relationships and live however they want, but they demand full acceptance and celebration of it. If a Christian voices that the LGBTQ+ lifestyle is not in accordance with Scripture and God is non-affirming, they do not treat that as a valid viewpoint to hold, but

hurl accusations of being intolerant, bigoted, homophobic, transphobic, and all sorts of other names. In other words, it is an exclusive worldview. If you do not agree, you will be told you're wrong, and you will be publicly chastised for your errors. **All truth claims are exclusive.**

"But if there is only one way, then what about all the people who have never heard?"

That is a great question. And here is the answer. That is why Christianity has always had and will always have a missionary orientation. From the beginning, our resurrected Lord told us to "Go!" Because Jesus is the only name under Heaven by which man can be saved, we must go proclaim His name! We are to go to our city, our nation, and our world and proclaim that Jesus is Lord and He alone can save. Why? Because He is the only way. Christian, does it bother you that Jesus is the only way and millions around the world will die never hearing about Him? Good. Then let that turn into action. Start giving to see missions efforts increase. Start going on missions opportunities to help share the gospel and see churches planted. Don't adapt your theology to the uncomfortable reality that people will die without hearing of Jesus. Adapt your behaviors to ensure that more do.

God determined to reconcile sinners to Himself through the giving of His One and only Son, Jesus, to die for the rebellion and guilt of sinners. Jesus would substitute Himself under the wrath of God in the place of man. This is God's gracious and undeserved invitation to man to be forgiven and reconciled. In fact, John 3:16 reminds us that "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life." Notice the words. Whoever believes. All that man must do to be at peace with God and restored to relationship both now and forever is to put their faith in Jesus. And it is WHOEVER believes.

Here is why I emphasize that word WHOEVER. It shows us that while Christianity makes exclusive claims (no name under heaven by which man can be saved), it is the most inclusive of all exclusive claims. It is the most inclusive because the invitation is offered to all who would believe. The invitation and net is thrown far and wide. All who believe can be saved. Yes, it is exclusively through faith in Jesus, but anyone in the world today can confess their sins and trust in Christ, and they will be saved. That is why - without blushing - we can say: Jesus is the only way to be forgiven of your sins and reconciled to God. Trust him and believe today. For there is no other name under heaven by which man can be saved. He is the way.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read the following verses and discuss why the disciples hearts would be troubled:
 - John 13:21-22
 - John 13:33
 - John 13:36-38
 - In what ways do we have the same troubled hearts?
2. What claim is Jesus making in verse 1 when he says, “Believe in God; believe also in me”? How does this help our hearts to not be troubled? What does this mean for those who say they trust God but don’t believe in Jesus?
3. Discuss how Jesus is going to prepare a place for us and how he will come again to get us.
4. What does Jesus mean in verse 6 when he says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”
 - The Way
 - The Truth
 - The Life
5. How do you feel about Christianities exclusive claim that there is no other way to eternal life except through Christ?
6. How can you use what you’ve learned in the sermon and group time to combat other exclusive truth claims like naturalism or postmodernism?

PRAYER TOPICS:

- TJC Pastor: Tim Lance
- NAMB Church Planter: Christian Moore - Spring, TX - *EverGrace Church, Magnolia*
- International Partners: Jason - Rome
- Unreached People Group (UPG): **Mochi** (Hindu traditions) in Bangladesh
 - Population: 233.000
 - Christian: 0.0%
 - Evangelical: 0.0%
 - Primary Religion: Hindu
 - Primary Language: Bengali
 - Status: **Unreached**