

Sermon Series Four: Believe and Live
(The Gospel of John: *The Preparation and Passion of the Messiah*
***Birth of the New Testament Church - John 13-21*)**
John 14:6
Prescriptions for Troubled Hearts (Part Two)

Perhaps the most appalling words in today's society are Christ's claim to be the only way to God. They are fighting words that engage a highly critical response. They are exclusive in a society that claims to be inclusive. Oprah Winfrey, for example, said, "One of the biggest mistakes humans make is to believe there is only one way. Actually, there are many diverse paths leading to what you call God." One Jewish rabbi said, "I am absolutely against any religion that says that one faith is superior to another. I don't see how that is anything different than spiritual racism. It's a way of saying that we are closer to God than you, and that's what leads to hatred."

But I want you to understand that this verse is all about grace and to disbelieve it and attempt to find another way is folly, is bound to produce despair, and is perverse. It is folly because God has already provided a way to himself. It is nonsense to look for another way. Who would seek a second cure for cancer if a perfect cure had already been found? If Jesus has lived the perfect life that you need to live in order to get to heaven and if he has died a fully satisfying death, it makes no sense for you to find another way through nature, or human morality, or another religion.

It is not enough to commune with nature out under the stars or to worship God on Sunday afternoon in your golf cart or on the sands of the beach. Nature will reveal to you the existence of a master designer and the master designer's immense power, but it cannot provide the gospel message you need from the Scriptures in order to receive God's salvation blessings or the growth and fellowship you need with other believers. It will lead you ultimately only to despair and emptiness.

It is true that God likes good people, but we must ask how good they must be to enter heaven. The answer is that they have to be absolutely good, even perfect, because God will settle for nothing less.

And it will not do to try to earn heaven by being baptized, being confirmed, receiving communion, or joining a particular denomination or non-denominational church. This always leads to despair because no other religion and no particular denomination can, in and of itself, bring you the peace with God that you need. That comes only through the person and work of Jesus Christ alone.

Above all, it is insulting to God to look for another direction when God has already provided the way in the person of Jesus Christ. What you are in effect saying is that Jesus Christ is a liar and you cannot expect God to admire you or praise you for that! You have in effect said that Jesus Christ cannot be trusted. There can only be one true God and other religions and other faiths, describe an entirely different God from the God of the Bible. You're still left with the question, "Which God is the true God?" And when that question is answered, it only makes sense that his way is the only way to finding him and ensuring eternity with him.

As we come to John 14:6, Jesus has begun to provide prescriptions, spiritual remedies, for the disciple's troubled hearts. He has given them the promise of a heavenly home at the end of this life. And now he shows them the way to that heavenly home. In doing so, he teaches us three very important things about himself:

I. He is the only way!

"I am the way," says Jesus. Jesus has just told the disciples that the way to God is certain and knowable. Thomas must've thought that the words "my Father's house" were a little bit ambiguous. He asks for a clear definitive answer as to where Christ was going and how they would get there. He wants a roadmap to this heavenly retreat site.

Jesus replies, as John Phillips states, by answering the three greatest questions of the human heart. How can I be saved? Answer: Jesus is the way. How can I be sure I'm saved? Answer: Jesus is the truth. How can I be fully satisfied? Answer: Jesus is the life.

We cannot overlook the faith that it would take the disciples to believe these words. On the eve of his crucifixion he says that he is the way when he would shortly hang on the cross. He says he is the truth when the lives of evil people were about to enjoy a spectacular triumph.

He says he is the life when within a matter of hours his corpse would be placed in a tomb.

Jesus is not saying that he is one way among many or that he pointed the way to God. He is saying something much more deep and exciting. He is going to be the one who will provide the way to God (through his death and resurrection) and then he will travel along with us all the way in our journey to heaven - our journey to see God. He doesn't merely give us directions; he gets in the car and travels along with us so that we can be absolutely sure that we will reach the destination that he has promised. He will be there with us enjoying every breathtaking view and providing strength to cope with every bump and pothole in the road. "I will never leave you nor forsake you" he says. "I am the way - your way!"

II. He is the embodiment of truth.

Jesus is totally dependable and trustworthy. You can take him at his word. He is not just the communicator of truth; He doesn't just point you to the truth. He is the embodiment of truth. He is God's final full revelation to man. That tells me that truth is not a system or philosophy. Truth is a person. If you want to know the truth, you must come to know Christ because he alone is truth.

Further, truth is not a relative thing; it has a certain inflexibility and intolerance to it. As John Phillips says, "Truth is always exclusive, always dogmatic - always intolerant of non-truth. Otherwise it would not be eternal, and absolute. It makes no difference whether the truth is a mathematical truth, a scientific truth, or, as here, a spiritual truth... Two multiplied by two equals four. It is wrong to say that two multiplied by two is three. Truth cannot accept that kind of tolerance. Since Jesus is the truth, he excludes all error, no matter how popular, widespread, ancient, or convincing it may be."

Dave Hunt makes this observation: "Everyone knows that to fly an airplane or practice medicine or even in baking a cake one must follow specific procedures. One can't even play a game without rules. Then why attempt to avoid the rules which God has set in the realm of the spirit? Sincerity won't get astronauts to the moon, nor will it prevent arsenic from killing a person who ingested it by mistake... It makes no

sense to set out from Los Angeles to New York without a map. What folly it would be to refuse to follow a map because maps are so restrictive, to insist that any road in any direction will do! How much greater is the folly of insisting that any road securely followed will take one to heaven!”

Our society is drowning in a sea of troubles. And perhaps the biggest reason why is that we have refused to obey the truth. Christ made it very clear that marriage is to be between a woman and a man. We reject that truth and legalize gay marriage. Christ placed a high value on life including both the life of creation and the crown of that creation - man and woman. We devalue that life by murdering a child in the womb and by then selling fetal body parts for hundreds and thousands of dollars. We become alarmed when ISIS beheads someone, but it does not alarm us to surgically “salvage” parts from an aborted child! What’s up with that! I believe that our nation is beginning to experience the wrath of God and will continue to do so because we have rejected both the truth and the one who is truth.

III. He is the life.

Jesus is the originator of life, the sustainer of life, the giver of life, and the very essence of what life is at its perfection. If you want to see life at its very best, look at the risen Jesus. As David Jeremiah remarks, “Jesus Christ didn’t come into this world simply to invigorate our old sinful nature. He didn’t come to just refine the ugliness in our life. He didn’t come to put a new suit on a corpse. He came to raise us from the kingdom of death to the kingdom of life.” Every sin we commit leads to some form of destruction and death. Pride kills the harmony in our relationships with others. Gluttony destroys our organs and our bodies. Murder takes away our sons and daughters. But practicing the teachings and following the example of Christ brings wholeness and fruitfulness into every area of our life.

Conclusion

Someone has said, “Christianity’s proclamation of exclusivity, *one* Savior for all people, is also its proclamation of inclusivity, *one* Savior for *all* people.” Christianity is both the most exclusive and inclusive religion in all the world. Jesus is the exclusive Savior who inclusively

invites all people regardless of race, economic station, education, or national origin. It all just Jesus!

Now if this is true, then we need to get the message out. There are people around us every day who are lost and don't know the way to heaven. We should be using every means at our disposal to point them to that way. Christ is the only one who can right the injustices in their world. Christ is the only one who can bring fullness to the emptiness in their life. Christ is the only one who can replace their imperfections with his perfections - the future perfections of a glorified body, soul, and spirit! Christ alone is the answer!

During the last days of the Third Reich, as Allied bombs rained down on Stuttgart and the Nazi terror writhed in its final death throes, Helmut Thielicke preached a remarkable series of sermons based on the Lord's Prayer. These were days of uncertainty and death. On more than one occasion, the shriek of air raid sirens interrupted his sermon. Thielicke writes that during this period there were times when he felt utterly stricken: "My work in Stuttgart seemed to have gone to pieces; and my listeners were scattered to the four winds; the churches lay in rubble and ashes."

In one of his messages, based upon the petition "Thy kingdom come," Thielicke describes an encounter with a woman from his congregation. He was standing in the street looking down into the pit of a cellar—all that remained from a building that an Allied bomb had shattered. The woman approached him and declared, "My husband died down there. His place was right under the hole. The clean-up squad was unable to find a trace of him; all that was left was his cap."

What does a pastor say in a moment like this? "I'm sorry" hardly seems adequate. But the woman had not come to Thielicke for sympathy. She wanted to express her gratitude. "We were there the last time you preached in the cathedral church," she continued. "And here before this pit I want to thank you for preparing him for eternity." I leave you with a question: "To whom will you make it your mission to prepare for eternity this day, this month, this year?" Christ is the way, their way!