

John 14:4-6 There's Only One Way

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One of the objections that people have to Christianity is that it is so exclusive. According to the Bible, the ONLY way to heaven is through Jesus Christ. You MUST be born-again. Now, not everyone believes that. In fact, you will find some who call themselves Christians who don't believe that. It's a very narrow statement. It's a very exclusive statement. And if you get your theology anywhere but out of the Bible, it's going to be a very offensive statement that you're likely to reject.

But Jesus, the one who Christianity is named for and built on, He believed it. In fact, He's the one who said it, as we'll see in our passage this morning.

What He says is so clear we don't need to spend much time explaining it or trying to understand what He means – it's obvious. So instead, I want to use the bulk of our time to consider why do Bible-believing Christians think we are the only ones with the right answer? Isn't that spiritually arrogant? We'll dig into that this morning, and hopefully come up with some good answers.

Now, remember what is going on – Jesus has gathered together with the Twelve Disciples in the Upper Room of a house in Jerusalem. They are celebrating the Passover, and Jesus is trying to explain to these men what is going to happen next. He's told them He is going to be betrayed, denied, and that He is about to go somewhere they can't come. Naturally, they were confused by all of this and started asking questions – so He began speaking to them again and we pick things up in verse 1 as Jesus tries to calm them down:

1 “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. **2** In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. **4** And where I go you know, and the way you know.”

Jesus tries to remind them of things that He has been telling them all along. He knew, and He told them, that one-day He would be put to death. But the disciples just didn't get it. They didn't understand. And now Thomas has the courage to admit, “Look, I still have no idea what you're talking about. Could you go over that one more time for us?”

5 Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?”

6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Last week we said Heaven was about intimacy with God, Jesus said He was preparing a place for us, “that where I am, there you may also be.”

Well, now we see that we get to heaven through intimacy as well. You don’t get to figure out your own spiritual journey. You don’t get to make your own path. Spiritual autonomy won’t get you to Heaven, only intimacy with Jesus will.

So let’s talk about that.

A lot of people are offended by a statement like this. It’s exclusive. It shuts people out. It says one way is right and others are wrong. And, in a day and age where we esteem open-mindedness and personal preferences, personal experiences, personal convictions, to make such a blanket statement like “no one comes to the Father but by Jesus” smacks of spiritual arrogance. It’s like Jesus is putting Himself in the position of a spiritual bouncer checking IDs at the door of Heaven.

So people get defensive and ask, “Christian, are you saying that He’s not going to let people in who were sincere about their beliefs? Are you saying He’s not going to let my Aunt Susy in? She was a good person. She tried to help people. She was one of the best people I’ve ever met. Or what about my friend Tony – he’s a follower of XYZ religion, and he’s a great guy, are you saying he can’t get into heaven?”

And we must reply that sincerity is not the key to heaven, and spirituality isn’t the key to Heaven. Jesus is the key to heaven, and according to His own words you can’t get there without Him. If He wasn’t necessary, if you could get to Heaven by being good, or by following XYZ religion, why did Jesus come, and what is the cross all about?

What you discover when you read the Bible is that He did have to come, it had to be Him, He really is the only way. Why do we have such a hard time swallowing that?

I want to give you three reasons this morning.

#1 – We don’t understand the categories.

You have to understand that there are things you can influence in the world, and there are things that influence you. The question is: which category does God belong in? Can you do whatever you want spiritually, or do you have to play by the rules as they stand?

We live in a day and age that exalts the individual and freedom of personal choice. But it hasn’t always been this way. At other times and in other places cultures have valued the State as central to the lives of men.

Other cultures have placed the family at the center of life – so everything you do is supposed to be a part of helping the family unit – your own desires and dreams are second to whatever it takes to help the family.

In India and other Asian countries, the universe and the system are the center – you accept your place in life, your status in society, because that’s where you were put – you just fulfill your role in the machine.

But we in the West have access to so much wealth that we live in a culture that is built on the consumer. And the consumer has the ability to make his or her own choices – to spend their resources in the ways that bring them the greatest happiness. So, if you want something, someone else will create goods or services to satisfy your wants. And if you like what they’ve built, or what they’re doing, or the way they’re doing it, you’ll give them money. You make multiple choices every day based on what you like – with no regard for what’s best for the State, the family, or universe – you just do what you want to do.

And since I can eat what I want, go where I want, wear what I want, and do what I want, I tend to extrapolate that out to other areas and think everything in the universe is centered around me. All that really matters is how much you like things, how much you believe in them.

Isn’t that the main driver of things like social media? I make statements and you like them. I share thoughts or links and you retweet them. I make a video and it goes viral. I take a picture, but I don’t like what reality looks like, so I add filters and affects and I make it look even better than it really did and then I share it with you and hope you like it.

So, we begin to get this silly notion that everything in life is based on how much you like stuff. How true it is for you. But we forget that that outlook only applies to certain categories of experience, it doesn’t apply to everything.

In today’s economy there are a lot of things that you can influence, but there are still a lot of other things that influence us.

Let’s say you need to take a trip to Australia. You can choose which airline you want to fly to get there – you can influence that. If you have the money, you can influence what seat you’ll have and the level of service you’d like to receive in flight. But you can’t choose to fly there by flapping your own arms. Gravity, and the laws of aerodynamics and flight influence you and they overpower your desires no matter how strong they may be.

You can choose the toppings on your pizza, but you can’t choose to breathe under water without SCUBA gear. You can choose what kind of shoes you like, but you can’t choose to jump to the moon. You can choose to have a child, but you can’t choose which of you is going to get pregnant and carry the child. There are things that you can influence and there are things that just influence you.

The problem is, most people put religion in the category of things we can influence. We think spirituality is like a salad bar you choose from – you put whatever you like on your plate and you enjoy it. Or, you say, “no thanks, I’m more of a meat and potatoes kind of

guy” and you skip the salad. Whatever works for you, it’s all going to turn out OK in the end...

But Jesus says no. He says you don’t get to pick and choose. You don’t get to affect God; He affects you. You can change the color of paint in your bedroom, you can change the way you do your hair, you can change your cell phone provider, but you can’t change the way people get to heaven. Since Heaven is where God dwells, He controls who gets in and how. What you think about how it *ought* to work out might make for an interesting conversation over a cup of coffee at Starbucks, but it’s never going to change a thing.

Which brings us to our second point:

#1 – We don’t understand our categories

#2 – We don’t understand our sources of information

The Bible is a textbook, not Facebook. Facebook is a collection of random updates, pictures, quotes, thoughts and opinions of others and you scroll down paying attention to whatever you want to read and giving a thumbs up by liking whatever you agree with.

Textbooks are written to teach you, they are full of information that you need to know for the exam. The Bible is a textbook – we learn what it says, not choose what parts we like. And Jesus doesn’t say He is A Way, or A truth, or A life, He says He is THE way, THE truth, and THE life. He intentionally excludes other options.

So if you try to collect little bits of theology here and there by ‘liking’ whatever strikes your fancy, then you aren’t going to be able to make them all fit together when you come to parts of the Bible like this. Jesus doesn’t fit in well with other people’s ‘religious’ ideas.

You have to ask yourself – what are the sources of authority in your life? Who or what has the right to constrain you or correct you? Who or what has the right to challenge your thoughts on an issue? When the Bible says things that you don’t like, do you accept them and understand that you need to change, or do you look for a way to explain them away and expect the Bible to change for you?

This issue of authority, especially as it relates to spiritual matters, touches on the greatest problem of our lives.

You have to understand what happened in the Garden of Eden – what was the very first sin? It wasn’t eating the fruit, there is nothing inherently evil about taking a bite out of an apple, or whatever was. But taking that bite symbolized something much deeper – it was rebellion, it was rejection of God’s authority – God had told them not to do it, and they decided they knew better than Him.

So, think about that – if you don’t like what the Bible says about what Heaven is like, or about how we get there – if you think it’s too narrow, or unfair, you’re committing that same sin as Adam and Eve, you’re putting yourself in a category above God – you’re sitting

in judgment over Him and over the Bible and you're making the final decisions instead of letting Him guide and direct you. Ask yourself, who is really in control? Who really gets to decide what is fair and unfair? If you reject what the Bible says, whose rules are you playing by?

I'm telling you, this is what is going on in the world today, but we don't see it this way, we don't talk about it in these terms so we don't see it so clearly. We constantly put ourselves in the center – we want to be in the position of ultimate authority, we want to decide how we spend our money, how we spend our time, who we spend it with, and what is right, what is wrong, what is good, what is bad, and what is best. We think we have the right and the power to define the world the way we want to.

And then we come across a verse like this. "I am the Way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father but by Me." And we don't like it, it's too stiff, it's too rigid, too rough around the edges, and we look for ways to soften it. But there aren't any. God didn't intend for there to be. Listen to what else the Bible has to say about this subject:

Acts 4:12 "[there is] no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

1 Cor 3: [11](#) For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1 Tim 2: [5](#) "For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus, [6](#) who gave Himself a ransom for all..."

Hebrews 10: 19 "[we] hav[e] boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, [20](#) by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through... His flesh,"

According to Scripture Jesus is the ONLY way we can enter Heaven. There are no other options as far as God is concerned.

Which brings us to our final point this morning:

#1 – We don't understand our categories

#2 – We don't understand our sources of information

And that's all because:

#3 – We don't understand the problem

We think the problems we have here and now on earth are the most pressing. People go through life looking for practical solutions to personal problems and if they find religious answers that suit them, GREAT! But what they are most concerned about are the issues of here and now.

My life isn't going well, I have a financial crisis, who or what can help with that? I need a boyfriend or girlfriend, I need a job, I need to get out of this mess, I need guidance – if God

or religion or the church, or whatever can help with that, well, that's great. If not, I'll look somewhere else, because I have to get this problem solved.

The problem is – all of this puts US at the center. These are MY problems now I need some help. We don't understand that the things going on here are only symptoms of a greater problem between us on earth and God in Heaven. All the problems you have here are a result of the separation of man from God that resulted from the Fall, and all of that occurred because we thought we knew what was best!

So we muddle our way through life looking for temporary solutions and don't realize how great our need really is. That doesn't mean our needs are real – people came to Jesus with all kinds of problems and He solved them for them – healed people, brought people back from the dead, comforted people, and gave guidance, but all of those people still had one HUGE problem – they were still separated from God. And that is why Jesus went to the cross.

He went to fix the real problem – He went to close the gap. To be the Way, the truth, and the life that would give us access to the Father.

Think about it - if God solved all your problems right now, if He just answered all your prayers you would still die and face an eternity without Him unless you accept the fact that your biggest problem, your greatest need is not here – it's between here and Him.

If you understand that our greatest problem is the fact that our sin separates us from a holy God, then you understand how only the one who solved that problem for us could claim to be the Way to Heaven.

Following other paths won't get you there because those other paths are not trying to solve the same problem. Every other religion in the world seeks to solve man's problems on earth – to give him a way to understand what he sees or to give him a way to get what he wants. Only the Bible says your problem is that you have offended God by doing what you want instead of what He commands, and only the Bible says that He has made a way for you to be forgiven.

You don't have to find a way, you don't have to earn your way, He is the way. But He is the only way.

That's the number one take away you need to leave here with this morning – Jesus is the only way to Heaven. And even though that is narrow, even though it is not pluralistic and inclusive, *it is available to anyone* who is willing to hear and accept. The Bible says we have ALL sinned and fallen short of the glory of God – we are ALL in need of forgiveness. Anyone who is willing to acknowledge their sin and repent can receive the Truth of Jesus, go the way of Jesus and receive new life in Jesus.

And Jesus has given those who are His followers a mandate to spread that good news – so Christians follow when He calls and spend their lives reaching out to others either through

ministry here in the local church, or in their neighborhood, their apartment complex, or their campus. Or they go around the world serving as missionaries, translating the Bible into languages which have never been written down before – they learn the language, develop an alphabet, and create a dictionary all so that they translate the Bible into the language of that people which have never read a book before. What other book are people willing to do that for? There is none.

And people even give their own lives – there is a long bloody trail of martyrs throughout the history of the church – those who have been persecuted and murdered for their belief in Christ and for their attempts to make Him known that others might discover the way, the truth, and the life.

Christianity is simultaneously exclusive to all those who reject it and inclusive to those who will receive it. Which side are you on? It's a question you need to resolve this morning. And if there is anything we can do to help you, please just let us know. The pastors and others are available to meet with you, pray with you, answer any questions you may have. But you must choose – what will you do with this Jesus who says there is no other way to heaven – is He a liar, is He a lunatic, or is He your Lord?