

Rev. Seth D. Bode †† Sermon 102, 05-10-2020 †† Easter 5

“Lord God, you have appointed me as pastor in your Church, but you see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon your Word. Use me as your instrument – but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all.”

“Sir, we would see Jesus.”

JOHN 14

¹“Do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ²In my Father’s house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that you may also be where I am. ⁴You know where I am going, and you know the way.”

⁵“Lord, we don’t know where you are going,” Thomas replied, “so how can we know the way?”

⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through me. ⁷If you know me, you would also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

⁸“Lord,” said Philip, “show us the Father, and that is enough for us.”

⁹“Have I been with you so long,” Jesus answered, “and you still do not know me, Philip? The one who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I am telling you I am not speaking on my own, but the Father who remains in me is doing his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me. Or else believe because of the works themselves.

¹²“Amen, Amen, I tell you: The one who believes in me will do the works that I am doing. And he will do even greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.”



There is a most prevalent thought out in the world that *all religions are equally viable and valid*. Recent surveys show 60% of Americans believe that – *all religions are equally viable and valid*.

This is “religion according to Oprah,” who once said “there are many paths to what you call God.” If you say Christianity is different, if you say Jesus is the only way, then be accused of intolerance or bigotry or worse.

Even if you have no doubts that Jesus is the only Way to the Father in heaven, 60% of your associates and friends disagree. Hey, even Thomas and Philip seemed to disagree, but only because they didn’t understand. Soon enough they would believe God, and believe also in His Son.

So it’s important to know the truth for ourselves.

If you have a discussion with someone who says, “Don’t all paths lead to God in heaven?” there are better words than just, “No, they don’t.” After all, was it your mother who always said if you don’t stand for something, you’ll fall for anything?

But we will want to say what Jesus says. “*I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*” Want to get to the Father?

Trust Also In Jesus Christ

Easter, like Lent, is a 40-day-long season. After Good Shepherd Sunday, it makes sense that we go back to Maundy Thursday and think about what Jesus predicted ... what He told the disciples ... before all this happened. There they were in the upper room. Jesus has warned them about the betrayer, Judas, and He has warned Peter about his future denial. The hearts of the Eleven were troubled, a word that refers to a dirty, swimming mess, stirring around in water.

So Jesus says, *Do not let your hearts be troubled.* He would go away. He would suffer. He would die. Yet at the end of the day, He wouldn’t just suffer and die, but He would come back to take the disciples where they really belonged. He tells them to believe in Him, to trust in God, trust also in Jesus. Jesus was going to be the Way to God.

Think of getting to God like climbing a mountain. There are various ways of getting to the top of Mt. Everest. That’s why people think it works to get to the top through various religions. Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism ... Why wouldn’t those other paths get you to God?

There is a big crater that blocks each of them. The great crater or canyon is known as sin—the sin problem. Unless you find a way to cross the canyon and solve the sin problem, you can't get to God.

So far all religions agree. Every religion has a version of God the Father; every religion has its laws and commandments. You get right with God by doing them. But in Christianity, the Lord says something else, and he already says it in the Old Testament: Isaiah 43:11, "*I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior.*"

Only the Lord can bring us to Himself, and He does it in Jesus Christ. Only Jesus can say, "I am the Way," because only He can bridge the canyon of sin and heal the breach. The bridge has been suspended by His cross and its path was opened to us at the tomb. That's why He is so strict and exclusive in saying, "*I am the Way,*" and, "*No one can come to the Father except through me.*"

You might say this is a matter of grace, not works. Grace alone saves, not works. All other religions try to save us by what we do, but they end up collapsing into that vast canyon. They make truth claims that go against Jesus. Someone cannot believe in Jesus Christ unless you deny some of those opposing truth claims. For instance, Islam denies the triune God and says with all seriousness that Jesus did not die on the cross. Or consider Buddhism, which says that life is suffering, and the cause of suffering is desire; but Buddhism burdens you with escaping desire. That religion does not show you Him who suffered on your behalf. You would have to compare them and believe that Jesus is right.

When Jesus says, "*I am the Truth*" we have to ask if He's telling the truth. Or it may be truth for you, just not for someone else. It's popular to believe all truth is relative, that there is no objective, absolute truth for absolutely everyone. My truth may not be her truth may not be his truth, so they say. And the only ones who are really wrong are the ones who claim to have the truth.

That just doesn't work. Suppose we're painting a wall. In a completely white room, you might have various guesses as to what color white (cream, off-white, beige) but you couldn't say black. That's just wrong. Two opposites aren't true at the same time. The same goes for grace and works: Either works is right or grace. It can't be both.

Another example: What if I took an ice bucket and dumped it on my head? You would say, “your hair and your clothes are going to get wet and cold.” If I told you I won’t get wet, I would hope you wouldn’t believe me. I’d be a false teacher. Jesus says “I am the Truth” and makes absolute claims of the truth constantly.

He says, “*I tell you the truth,*” 79 times in the Bible. An example: “*I tell you the truth: whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned. He has crossed over from death to life,*” John 5:24. There you have not only truth, but also life ... and that bridge again.

When we get into discussions with others, they might say, “Who do you think you are? Are you better than everyone else?” It is so important to do as the Word of God says, to “*speak the truth in love.*” Answer “*with gentleness and respect.*” When Jesus spoke the truth, they wanted to put him on the cross. We also have our crosses to bear. But don’t let that stop you.

- “*God our Savior wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the Truth,*” 1 Timothy 2:4.
- Jesus said it, “*God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, and that whoever believes in him will not perish but will have eternal life.*”

The world has told us just “believe in something.” Be sincere and it will count. Think of trust or faith as a very tight hug. If you were in the water, and I say, “I’ll get help! Just hold onto something!” What would you like me to toss to you in the meantime? A life preserver or a rock? It’s the difference between life and death.

The idea of God the Father is agreeable, because it’s nice to think of someone who made you and watches over you. The hard part becomes agreeing with and trusting Jesus Christ, the Son of God. But the payoff is so great. There is only one bridge. Only in Christianity does God hold unearned love for sinners, His natural-born enemies. Only Jesus Christ solves sin and guilt. Only the Son made things right between the Father and us. Only He removes all doubt of our status with God.

Everyone is invited to cross. After all, He took everyone’s place on the cross. Your sins were nailed to His cross.

Welcome to the bridge! The Truth. The Life. He is for all people. He is for you. Amen.