

The Fifth Sunday of Easter. The scripture text is taken from John 14:1-14

Of all of the “I am” statements that Jesus made, this morning’s statement is probably the most controversial in our society today.

Jesus claimed, “I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

The reason this statement is so controversial is that, there is very little wiggle room. It is very exclusive. According to Jesus, He is the only way to the Father, there is No Other Way, Period!

In our society today, there is an increasing opposition, even among Christians, to what appears to them, to be intolerant and exclusive claims.

It has provoked some people to respond, “Christians are so arrogant to think that Jesus, “is the only way, that somehow, they have a corner on the market of salvation.”

Perhaps you have heard, “Don’t all religions pretty much teach the same thing anyway, if you boil them all down?”

You know, be good, love others, live peacefully, and resist evil. It shouldn’t matter, if you are a Christian, a Jew, a Muslim, a Hindu, or a Buddhist, or whatever you practice, because if you pulled out all of the basic teaching of religions, you would end up with the same basic ingredients.

It’s like a lot of Italian dishes, they are all prepared differently, for example: lasagna, manicotti, ravioli, and spaghetti, basically, these dishes are all composed of the same ingredients: Meat, cheese, tomato sauce, and pasta.

Therefore, “aren’t these religions just taking different roads, yet going up the same mountain to God, so that the important thing is to be faithful in your practice?”

Not too long ago, I had an interesting conversation with someone who claims “universalism”, meaning that all paths lead to the same place. In the course of our conversation, she said, “that Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, etc. as long as they live good lives, will make it into heaven”. So I said, “What is the standard for being good, in other words what is the standard for living a “Good Life?” Define for me the standard. She couldn’t answer. She couldn’t define it.

Folks, there is no standard of good, so to speak, Jesus didn’t come into this world, to just teach people how to live good moral lives. Because if Jesus came into this world to teach us morality, and how to live good moral lives, He was a dismal failure.

Jesus came into this world, to teach us how we could be in a relationship with God, His Father, just as He was in a relationship with the Father, and how God would work in our lives, giving us the power to change our lives, to live for Him, not self and to seek His Kingdom.

This relationship, can only be restored in one way, through another person, and that is through Jesus, God’s only begotten Son.

The way to God is not through the teachings of Mohammed, or Joseph Smith who founded the Mormon Church, or any other self-proclaimed messiah or self-proclaimed prophet. Mohammed as well as other cult leaders, regardless of time and place were nothing but frauds.

The way to God is not through good works or merits, or achievements. It is not a spiritual checklist, where one checks off this or that, so as to earn favor with God.

Jesus was not just another road sign among the many, pointing us in the right direction to God. Jesus isn't just a compass or GPS to direct our path, Jesus is the path connecting us to God. Jesus said, this in verse 2, Jesus said: "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself. So that where I am, there you may be also." (verses 2 to 3)

We do not find the way to God the Father, to heaven, by just following particular religious teachings, but by following a person, being in a relationship with that person, and that person is Christ Jesus, the Son of God, by trusting in Him, by faith, that He is God, co-equal and co-eternal to the Father and the Holy Spirit.

By faith, we believe that the Father is in Him and He is in the Father, and that Jesus died for us upon that Roman cross, and was resurrected for us, so that He (Christ) would live in us, and we in him.

Imagine you are in a tall building, and all of a sudden, there was a loud and thunderous explosion and flames are shooting up around all the windows, from below you. You discover very quickly that the building was on fire, and there was smoke all around and a fireman comes in and yells; "The building is on fire, all the exits are blocked by the flames and debris, you need to follow me, I know the way out," and some people in the room respond, "How do I know the building is really on fire? Perhaps you have created all of this smoke just to get us to abandon our comfortable religion to follow you."

While others may say: "I believe there is a fire, but I think I would rather take my chances and find my own way out of the building," not trusting the word of warning from the fireman that all of the exits have been blocked by debris, caused by the fire.

Now this may seem like a ridiculous scenario to us, but this happens all the time. Our fireman, Christ Jesus, has tried to warn us that there are consequences to our sins, eternal ones, the result of which is separation from God, eternal punishment, whatever we want to refer to it as, but some people don't believe it.

They think, we as Christians, (and Jesus) are just sending up a smoke screen of exaggeration to convince them to leave their comfortable religion (with all of their works righteousness) with no real reason. Remember, in their mind, all paths lead to the same place.

Either they like to believe there is no after-life, or no hell, or that God is so loving that He is going to overlook the sin in our life, so that when we die, we can be with Him, heaven will be just one big hug.

Or, our warning is just one big guilt trip to convince people to join our particular brand of religion, or others may agree that they need to get out of the building before it burns down.

In other words, since the threat of hell, is real and eternal punishment is real, those who believe that all paths lead to the same place, are like those who choose to follow their own way out, because all of the exit signs will supposedly lead to the same place, even though Jesus said the exits are blocked by fire and burning debris.

The truth of the matter is, that a relationship with God is only possible through the forgiveness of sins, we receive through faith in God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. This is grace, not works, but grace.

Jesus is the way to the Father, because He is in the Father, and the Father is in Him. In chapter 14, verse 9, Jesus said: "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?'"

No one, not even any founder of any other world religion has ever made this claim and has been able to substantiate it through miracles and by rising from the dead.

Jesus is the only one who is able, to go and to prepare a place for us with God the Father, because He (Jesus) is God, and it is Jesus who is the only person who has ever lived a truly righteous and sinless life.

Think about this, if you were going on trip somewhere that you have never been, and by the way, you don't have a map, wouldn't you want someone who has been there, guiding you?

Unfortunately, many people today in our world, are skeptical about the truth of Jesus' claims. They choose not to believe.

So you ask the why question, why would some people not believe that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life?

Well, let's go back to the scriptures. Some people respond to Jesus' claim the same way, Pontius Pilate did when Jesus revealed that He was King, and that He had come to testify to the truth, and that anyone who really loves the truth will recognize the truth in Jesus' words.

Pontius Pilate's response was, "What is Truth?" A lot of people today are like Pilate, they ignore Jesus' words, because they do not believe there is such a thing as absolute truth.

Unfortunately, we live in an age and a time, where there is no such thing as absolute truth. For instance, it used to be, that if God's Word said it was true, then it was true for every person.

So if Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, and that no one comes to the Father except through Him, then it is true.

Today, and I think I am safe to say this, but the truth has become relative to the person. If I were to say to someone, "that Christ Jesus died for your sins and that He is the only way to the Father." Perhaps that person might respond by saying, "That maybe true for you, but it not true for me."

Twenty six times in John's Gospel, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth." And most of these occasions Jesus told people about Himself, about His relationship with God, and how we need Him for a relationship with God.

Since Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Him, Jesus must speak the truth. Jesus says in verse 10: "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works."

It is the divine presence of God in Jesus, that allowed him to do the miracles he did, and tell Jesus to say the things he said. The words that Jesus spoke to us, are the truth, because He is the Father and the Father is in Him.

The question for us, remains, are we going to believe Jesus' words are the truth, even if they are difficult for us to accept? And are we going to choose to follow Him exclusively, believing as his disciples did that Jesus has the words of eternal life and that He is the Holy One of God?

Without believing Jesus is the way, and the truth, we cannot experience life. Jesus said, "I am the life." The very first words of John's Gospel teach us, that Jesus was co-creator of life, with His Father.

The writer of John's Gospel says in chapter 1, verse 1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and without Him, not one thing came into being." (verses 1-3)

Jesus was the author of life with His Father at the beginning of time. However, Jesus told us, that in order to experience eternal life with God in heaven, and have abundant life, right now, here on earth, we must trust in Him.

Folks, that trust comes by faith which is a gift of God, by God's grace. Because of our fall into sin, God could have said, I condemn them all, they shall all perish in their sins.

But in God's fore-knowledge, in God's plan of redemption, God said I am going to send my Son into this sinful world and I will save my people from the penalty of their sins.

So when the time was right, God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus into the world, to live among us, to teach us about God's love for us, to show us the way to the Father, that would be His death upon the cross, for the forgiveness of our sins, for without forgiveness of sins, there is no salvation. And on the third day, God raised His Son, Jesus from the tomb, thereby, defeating the power of sin, death and devil once and for all.

We have this wonderful promise of God, that Jesus the Christ, the Son of the everlasting and living God is the way, the truth and the life, and that no one comes to the Father except through Him. By God's amazing grace, by His baptismal grace, by faith, we know this to be true, and on this, we stand. Amen.

Let us pray:

Loving God, You have prepared the way of salvation for all who believe in your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Help us in our daily living to reach to those who do not know you as "the way, the truth and the life". Let our lives, be an example of the faith in which we live, and in which we profess, that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven, all other paths are dead ends. All these things we humbly pray, in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

