

Voice of the Church Message
Is Jesus the Only Saviour?
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We live in an era in which “tolerance” is a virtue prized above all others. Belief in absolutes is frowned upon. The truth is said to be “relative” - what's true for you isn't necessarily true for me. The idea of absolute truth has been exchanged for a belief that everything is a matter of opinion. And when one person, or one group of people, claim to have possession of the truth, and attempt to convince others of that truth, they are often viewed as being “intolerant.”

In a pluralistic society, where no group of people is supposed to make a claim for the absolute truths of their beliefs, it can be difficult to proclaim a message that is exclusive. It goes against the grain to preach a message that claims for itself the status of absolute truth, a message that excludes that status from all other beliefs. And so it may be tempting to downplay the exclusive claims of any religion, because, after all, we all just want to get along!

Jesus Christ, and the men who first followed in His footsteps, lived in a society that was not much different from our own. The Roman Empire was every bit as pluralistic and relativistic as our modern North American society is. No religious belief was out of bounds, unless you proclaimed that your religion was the only true religion. And in that world, to that culture, Jesus made this outstanding claim: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). And after Jesus' death and resurrection, his disciple Peter proclaimed the same exclusive message: “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” (Acts 4:12).

So when we Christians say that our religion is the only true religion, we're not simply proclaiming our own opinion. If it were simply a matter of opinion, what one person has to say can't possibly be any more valid than anyone else's opinion. That would be like claiming that apple pie is inherently better than cherry pie – nothing more than a matter of taste, of one person's opinion against another's. But the fact is, the church of Jesus Christ proclaims an exclusive message – that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour – not because it's a matter of opinion, but because Jesus Himself, and His closest followers, made that very claim.

And they backed that claim up with an appeal to facts, not to emotions and feelings, or to personal opinions. Jesus spoke on behalf of His heavenly Father, and told the people, “I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has Himself given me a commandment – what to say and what to speak” (John 12:49). And He backed up that claim by the things He did. He proved the authority that He had by commanding the wind and the waves to obey Him. He had the power to make the lame walk, to give the power of speech to those who were unable to talk, and to give sight to the blind. And in His most amazing displays of Divine power, He even gave life to the dead.

So when Jesus claimed that He is the only way to salvation, we must take that claim seriously. His disciples, who were eyewitnesses to Jesus' mighty works, believed Him to be who He claimed to be. And so they proclaimed the same exclusive message, and they backed up their proclamation by appealing to the ultimate evidence – the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Jesus had come, they said, to bring salvation to those who believe in Him. He had given His life as the perfect sacrifice for sins, and apart from Him, there is no possibility of salvation. And what's more, they said, He will come again.

As the apostle Paul said in Acts 17:30 and 31, God “commands all people everywhere to repent, because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the

world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead.” That man, appointed by God the Father, is Jesus; His resurrection proved that He is the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one comes to the Father, except through Him.

Some would have you believe that it isn't loving to tell people that they need to change their beliefs in order to be saved. Some say that if we really care for others, we won't call their personal beliefs into question. But since what Jesus said about Himself is the truth, and there is no other way of salvation, just the opposite is the case! Because Jesus not only told us that He is the only way to the Father; He also told us that we have to love our neighbour as ourself. And if we truly love our neighbour, we will want them to have what we have been given. And what Jesus has given us is the gift of eternal life.

And so we Christians will continue to proclaim the good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ. Not because we think we're any wiser, or smarter than anyone else. Not because we think we're superior to anyone else. But only because we know that we are no better, or more worthy, than anyone else. We proclaim Jesus as the only way because we trust Him. He has given us life, and we want others to receive that gift as well! We have received a tremendous gift – not because of how good we are, but despite the fact that we are just as unworthy as everyone else. And so, when we proclaim the message that Jesus is the only way of salvation, we aren't proclaiming our superiority – we are proclaiming the superiority of Jesus Christ, a superiority that He claimed for Himself, a superiority that he proved that He had.

The message of the Christian faith has been defined as “one beggar telling another beggar where he found bread.” When the Church proclaims the message of Christ to the world, His command to repent, to believe, and to follow Him, we are proclaiming that message as grateful recipients of the greatest gift imaginable – the gift of eternal life. Apart from His grace, and the love that He showed for us, while we were dead in our transgressions and

sins, we would have nothing. But through Him, we have everything. And we want others to share in our joy, the joy that Jesus has given us.

And so, that message continues to go out to the world. That message may be frowned upon by those who believe that a person's faith is simply a matter of personal preference. That message may be viewed as being "intolerant." But those opinions don't make the message of the gospel any less true. Jesus is the way. He is the truth. He is the life. There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. So listen to His call – repent and believe. Turn away from your sins, and turn to Jesus. He will never turn you away. And He will never leave you, or forsake you. That is the good news, and it's good news for every culture, for all people, living in every era. There is a Saviour, and there is only one Saviour. And His name is Jesus.