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#78

“The Way, the Truth and the Life” John 14:4-7

Introduction

People love pop culture. Pop culture, of course, is nothing more than what is frequently encountered and widely accepted. If we like it as a culture, if there is a vague acceptance of it, then it is considered to be true. Pop culture is typically concise enough to put on a bumper sticker. Pop culture has only one real prerequisite: it must be generally *popular* with the masses, hence the name *pop*. Therefore, when it comes to theology, pop culture by definition must be broadly attractive enough to please the majority. And herein lies our problem.

Pop theology states that *the road to hell is paved with good intentions*. People love that phrase. It neat, catchy, concise and has a practical message. The subtle implication is that if you really want to get to heaven, you'd better do what you say. Simply intending to do something is not good enough. And while the concept of faithfulness and doing good is thoroughly biblical, to mix it with the message of salvation is serious error.

Similarly, the pop statement that *there are many paths to God*, is widely accepted and brings immeasurable comfort to people, it is not, of course, biblical or remotely true.

The message of the Bible will always be at odds with our culture – unless and until the culture is transformed and disciplined. Until then the Bible's message is viewed as narrow and exclusive. Today,

we come to perhaps the most exclusive of all statements ever made by Jesus. *I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me.* In that statement we will find that there is not room for a single variant path to God. Jesus Christ restricts and limits reconciliation to the Father through Himself alone. That makes the gospel counter-cultural and offensive to many. But it also holds out great hope to those who want to know God. There is a way to God. There is truth to be known. And there is life that is beyond what we can ever find in and of ourselves.

[John 14:1-7]

Sometimes we take Thomas' nickname a little further than we ought. Verse 5 is usually taken as another piece of evidence to validate his moniker as *Doubting Thomas*. But in reality, Thomas is expressing more confusion by his question than doubt. This is not so much lack of faith as it is a lack of understanding. And in that regard he's pretty much like the rest of the disciples.

Peter didn't understand why Jesus would want to wash his feet. James and John wanted to sit at Christ's right and left side in heaven. At His ascension, they all wanted to know if that was the time he would restore the kingdom to Israel. And we could go on and on with examples of His closest companions missing the point.

But the beauty of this passage is that Jesus answers Thomas' question with absolute clarity. And for good reason. Is there any more fundamentally important question a person could ask than how to get to God? To confess that one is unsure of the way is not a sign of weakness, but a

sign of interest. But this is where Jesus' answer is not always to the liking of others.

His answer is both all inclusive and yet very much exclusive.

It is all inclusive in that his answer is for every person. Whether some one asks the question or not – whether some likes the answer or not – when Jesus answers this question he is answering it for every person, in every time, from every place – regardless of culture, race, language, education, religion or generation. When Jesus says *no one comes*, he is including every person.

But the statement is also very exclusive. *No one comes to the Father, **but through Me***. Jesus Christ alone is the means of salvation. If we don't come His way, we don't come at all. Jesus once said *Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it*. Now there's a statement against pop culture and against the majority opinion.

There are two ways to go into eternity – one way is through Christ. That leads to life. The other way is any other way besides Christ. That path has many names and many forms – for it is wide indeed. But it is essentially one path and it leads to death.

And so this statement of Christ's is a major offense to those who don't want to be included in the equation. It is both too inclusive because they want out. And it is too exclusive because it gives no alternatives. This is why Christians are rightly charged with narrow mindedness. When it comes to the message of the gospel and the way of salvation, the Bible leaves absolutely no wiggle room. There are no second choices. There are not multiple paths

or options. *No one comes to the Father but through Christ.*

So, what does it mean to *come to the Father through Me*? The first half of the verse really explains it. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. The reformers referred to this as Solus Christus. Christ alone. In 1996, the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals adopted the Cambridge Declaration which reaffirmed that Christ alone is sufficient to grant us salvation. Commenting on the erosion of a Christ-centered gospel the Declaration says this. *As evangelical faith has become secularized, its interests have been blurred with those of the culture. The result is a loss of absolute values, permissive individualism, and a substitution of wholeness for holiness, recovery for repentance, intuition for truth, feeling for belief, chance for providence, and immediate gratification for enduring hope. Christ and his cross have moved from the center of our vision.*

We affirm that our salvation is accomplished by the Mediatorial work of the historical Christ alone. His sinless life and substitutionary atonement alone are sufficient for our justification and reconciliation to the Father.

Jesus said it very simply.

1. ***I am the way.*** There is no other Savior.

If there is an unmistakable implication from this statement it is that we are lost. Why do we need a way? Because if we have a desire for our own good and happiness, then we need to find our way back to our Creator. There is not good for us apart from the Father. Jesus is promising us a path to God, a path to heaven.

This is the major plot or theme of the Bible. The sub plot is that man wants to go his own way. He wants to find his own way to life and happiness.

So Cain worshiped God his way. Esau rejected the covenant and pursues his own pleasure. The golden calf in the wilderness was a direct statement that the Israelites didn't need Moses or his holy God. Men of other nations tried to find a way to God by sacrificing their children or worshiping nature. The Pharisees added their own thoughts and ideas right next to God's Word. But the theme remained the same. *Every man did what was right in his own eyes.* Our modern version is *I did it my way.*

So today we are surrounded by people who seek heaven, they seek a way, by pursuing whatever seems **instinctively** correct to them. John summarized the way of the world a few years after he wrote this gospel when he wrote his first epistle. How did he summarize the way of apart from Christ – *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life?* At the heart of finding our own way we will find two driving forces – lust and pride. Lust is the thing in our heart that drives us to find fulfillment apart from Christ. Pride is that thing that says I can stand alone and make my own way. I don't need any help.

So what is it that makes Jesus' way the only way? How and why could Jesus say He is the way? The answer is found only in the atonement. Jesus is the only way because only in Him the thing that separates us from God dealt with. At the cross lust and pride are defeated. The beautiful thing about Jesus being the way is that we don't have to find a way. We don't have to forge our own path. Everything that needed to be done, Christ did. Our sins were paid for. Justice was met.

And so, from a practical stand point we need to ask ourselves what path we are traveling. Is your trust and faith in Christ? Do you count your own goodness as anything of value? Christ says it is not.

The only way is to believe that He lived for you and died for you. And if you have begun with Christ, are you continuing in Christ? What controls you day by day? Is it your lust and your pride? Or is it Jesus Christ?

2. I am the truth. There is no other gospel.

If there is a creeping danger in the church today it is that we can know God apart from truth. There is a disdain for doctrine and the Word and a great emphasis placed on feelings and experience. When Jesus declared that He was the truth it was not a claim that stood independent from Him being the way. We cannot walk in the way without walking in the truth.

The letter to the Galatians addresses this very thing. Listen to how Paul begins Galatians. *I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!*

Later in the letter he gets more specific. In chapter 5 he tells them if they try and create their own way to God by developing their own truth they cannot be saved. *Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.*

Bob Bibby sent me a website this week by a man named Dr. Jose Luis de Jesus Miranda who claims to be the King of kings and Lord of lords. He calls Himself "the man Christ Jesus". His website proclaims that he is God in the flesh. Here's quote from an article written about him. *His message is simple (you know, once you get over the whole "I am Jesus" thing). All sin died with Christ on the cross. Anytime a priest or a preacher calls you a sinner, he's a liar who's trying to steal your money. In fact, other churches should be picketed, which is something his followers have done in Miami and Latin America.*

"Believing in Jesus of Nazareth does not make you a Christian," he says. "Jesus of Nazareth was a Jew. He wasn't a Christian; he was a Jewish man...People who put their eyes on Jesus of Nazareth become Jews, and they don't know."

This man's answer is simple. You have to have faith. But the truth you are to believe is that you are not a sinner and have no need to be saved. There is no reason for me to doubt in that Mr. Miranda is sincere. But the way to the Father is not determined by a person's sincerity or the amount of faith and conviction he has. The way to God is determined by the reality of the gospel and belief that it is true. It is only the truth will lead to a proper faith.

3. I am the life.

Here is the destination of following Christ. If we come to the Father through Jesus alone, because He is the way and the truth, we will have life. Again Jesus makes an assumption. We are dead. We need life. We need a get from death to life. The truth is we are sinners. The truth is we are

headed for eternal death and judgment. The truth is even the life we have here and now is not the fullness of life that God promises us in Christ. If we will believe in Christ, we will have Christ.

Notice that Jesus doesn't say He is the way to life. It doesn't say Jesus is the means to attaining life. Jesus said He **is** the life. When we trust in Christ, He lives in us. *I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.*

Does this describe you? Listen, the true message of the gospel is not popular in our culture. It seems arrogant and narrow – and indeed it would be if it were simply some idea we came up with to explain suffering and pain and sin and death. But it is Jesus Christ who makes this assertion. What to the world seems stifling and dead, is to those who will believe the most incredible promise of life and hope. *Jesus said, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me. There is something and someone to believe.*

Application – die to self. Do it His way.

Follow Him. Lay aside:

- your plans for His plans
- your will for His will
- your priorities for His priorities

He is your life. You must believe His truth. You must walk in His way.