

Is Jesus The Only Way?

On Sunday, we explored three different ways to answer that question. Now let's talk!

1. Warm up question. Who is the most devout person you've ever known from another religion. What were your impressions of that person and his/her way of life?
2. Jeff began Sunday's sermon by telling how Christian author, Frederica Matthewes-Green journeyed from skeptic to believer in Jesus. In your own life, what brought you to Jesus? Why do you follow him?
3. **The Traditional View.** The most common Christian position through the ages has been that Jesus is the only way. Those who embrace this view point to scriptures like John 14:6, where Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to God except through me," and Acts 4:12, where the Apostle Peter says, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."
 - a. What are some of the arguments in favor of this viewpoint?
 - b. What are some of the arguments against this viewpoint?
 - c. Jeff told the story of several infamous popes who did dastardly things like self-enrichment, bloody purges, serial adultery, defacing dead bodies, and torturing their opponents. He contrasted them with a Syrian Muslim man who has devoted his life to creating and maintaining a sanctuary playground for children traumatized by the Syrian civil war. Then Jeff asked a question: "Should I really believe that a Syrian Muslim who is doing what Jesus said we should do will be lost while those ravenous popes get to live with God in eternity because they confessed the 'right' religious creed?" How do you answer that question?
4. **The Progressive View.** Moved by some of the concerns we've already discussed, many Christians today have adopted a view that says, "Jesus is my way, but not the only way." Those who embrace this view often say, "There are many paths to God." Some would even say, "All paths lead to God."
 - a. What are some of the arguments in favor of this viewpoint?
 - b. What are some of the arguments against this viewpoint?
 - c. Jeff asked us to consider a couple examples of religions that are filled with hate – white supremacist expressions of Christianity and jihadist expressions of Islam. He reminded us that Jesus says, "Love your enemy," whereas these religions say, "Hate your enemy." They both can't be right. One leads us to a God of hate, the other to a God of love. Although these are extreme examples, they remind us that all religions aren't necessarily equal. What do you think of this line of argument? Do you agree or disagree? Do we have a responsibility to make sure we

understand the content of a religion before expressing an opinion about whether it's good?

5. **The Hybrid View.** Jeff offered a third theory that might be able to reconcile aspects of the Traditional and Progressive Views. This Hybrid View is derived from two key points – first, names are just sounds, so what matters when we talk about God is not the names we use, but the personality of the being we're referring to.
- Jeff's real name is Gordon. Doody's real name is Louella. Tinker's real name is Millicent. Tex's real name is Hilbert. Do you have to know a person's correct given name to know the person? Why or why not?
 - The name Mary and Joseph gave their son – the sound they made when they called to him – was not Jesus, but rather Yeshua. We got the name Jesus in a roundabout way, i.e., Yeshua was transliterated into Greek, then transliterated into English, and the end result was Jesus. Does it bother you that you have been calling your Savior by the “wrong” name your whole life? Why or why not?
 - If two people describe the same being – a being who is all-loving, all-powerful, gracious, kind, just, and forgiving – but refer to that being by different names, are they describing the same person or not? Does it matter what name we use for God?
6. The other key point in the Hybrid View is that the essence of knowing a person is not the details of their biography, but rather who they are as a personality, i.e., the person they are. It's possible to be in someone's presence for a short time and get a deep sense of who they are, without knowing anything about their life history.
- Have a person or two in your group share something about their life history that the group probably doesn't know. Does the fact that you didn't know that biographical fact mean you never really knew that person until just now?
 - To “know” God in the deepest sense, what is it that we most need to know?
 - Read Matthew 7:21-27. According to what Jesus says here, what is the ultimate test of whether someone truly “knows Jesus”?
 - Suppose a person “does the will of God in heaven” (Mt. 7:21) and builds a life on a foundation consistent with the teachings of Jesus (Mt. 7:24), but has never before heard the name Jesus or heard the teachings of Jesus. Is that person saved?
 - Read Romans 1:19-20. According to this verse, is it possible to know everything essential to “knowing God” without ever hearing the Gospel preached? If so, why should we share our faith?
 - Based on all we've discussed, how would you now answer these questions: Is Jesus the only way? Can people from other religions be saved? If so, how?