

Title: Only Jesus
Text: 1 Timothy 2.5-6
Theme: The Exclusivity of Christ
Series: 1 Timothy
Prop Stmt: The exclusive claims of the gospel are the only true source of security for your life.

Read Text:

Imagine this: a young man is expressing his affections for a young lady. He tells her that he loves her. She wants to believe that, but the problem is, this guy has said the same thing to five other girls. In fact, every pretty girl he meets he tells, "I love you." Does she feel secure with him? Does she feel like she can trust him? No. If he really loves her, then he must love her as his girl, exclusively. If and when he loves her only, is she secure. But, loving her exclusively means that he must not love the other girls, right? Unless he commits to loving only one, he will never be free to really love.

It is generally assumed that all of the world's religions are basically equal and if you disagree with that, then you are being hateful. We disagree with that, not because we are being hateful, but because we are being truthful. The world's religions are not equal. They do not teach the same things nor have the same values and ethics. We hold to the fact that Christianity is the only legitimate religious faith in the world. And not only that, but there are many varieties of Christianity that we reject as well. We reject them because they believe things that simply are not true.

As we saw last Sunday, this text challenges to pray. We are told to pray to God. We are told that the prayers of genuine Christians influence God. That seems incredible. How can we believe that? We can believe it because God has provided access for us to God through Christ. So, in this challenge to pray, 2 bold statements are made (and they are the 2 points of my sermon). 1) There is one God. There are not many gods, there is one God. And 2) there is only one way to this one God and this one way is Jesus. That means that this one way to God is only through Jesus. We can only be in a right relationship to God through Jesus only. Not Jesus plus your parents. Not Jesus plus your talents. Not Jesus plus Mary. Not Jesus plus the saints. Not Jesus plus church attendance. Not Jesus plus serving in the church, or a soup kitchen, or fundraising for cancer research. Not Jesus plus being nice to others. We can only be in a right relationship to God through Jesus only. But in order to really trust and love Christ, I have to love him and trust him exclusively. Genuine Christianity is more than saying "I love Jesus and think he is cool." Genuine Christianity is built on the truths that there is one God (and not any others) and that there is only one way to God (and not any others). In order to really believe that there is one way to God means that I do not believe that there is any other possible way. This morning, I not only want you to understand the truthfulness of these two bold statements, but I want you to see the benefit of them. The exclusive claims of the gospel are the only true source of security for your life. Christianity is built upon the foundational truth that:

I. There is one God (5 a)

This means that:

A. All other gods are a fraud.

This is a statement of exclusivity. In other words, we believe that there is not only one God, but that there is only one God. That means that all of the other gods are not really, actually gods. They pretend to be gods, but they do not really exist. So, is it okay to pray with people of other religions who are praying to other gods? What do you think? At the very least, it is a waste of time because you are talking to something that does not exist. But, I think it is actually dangerous because you are pretending that what others are doing actually has some meaning. So, when the Bible says that "there is one God" as it does here and in many other places in the Bible, it eliminates the validity of other religions. That is upsetting, even offensive to many people. But think about the enormous benefit of this truth. You have a Creator. You are not alone and your Creator has spoken.

B You are not alone

A few months ago I had to have an MRI. They lay you on a movable table and slide you into a very narrow tube, where, in complete darkness you have to lay still while the machine takes detailed pictures of a part of your body. The technician gave me a set of headphones to dampen the incessant banging noise of the machine and to have a means by which she could communicate with me in case I freaked out from claustrophobia and utter darkness. After being slid into position where I felt like I was going to be frozen in kryptonite the technician assured me that I was not being abandoned. Someone was still out there. You know what? That's kind of nice. "Don't worry, Mr. Johnson, I will be here the entire time." Now, I am not claustrophobic, and narrow spaces like that, do not bother me and in fact, I took a nap. But it was still nice still to know that there in the darkness and in that sense of isolation, someone was there.

This statement, this truth claim, this bold assertion that "there is one God" is defining and it disqualifies all other god claims as being fraudulent. But, this claim is also glorious. You are not alone. When you look up in the sky at night and wonder, is anyone out there? The answer is, "Yes, there is and he is looking back." How can I say that? I say that because this God has spoken. This God has taken the initiative to communicate with us.

C. God has spoken.

Let me explain it this way. Our daughter recently joined the Army and several weeks ago, she left for boot camp, or basic training. Those of you who have been through basic training know what she is going through. I don't. I did not serve in the military, so I have been trying to learn the difference between a sergeant and a lieutenant, between a platoon and a company. When we said good-bye to her, we were told that she would be able to make one 60-second phone call after she arrived at boot camp to let us know that she had made it. After that, all communication would be by letter. Well, we never got the phone call. And the first week went by and we had no letter. Then the second week went by and

still no letter. And since we had not heard from her, we had no address to send letters to. At that time, we went out of town. We had planned this trip, but hated to go. Gratefully, Robyn Norbeck checked our mail while we were gone and when a letter from our daughter came, she took pictures of the pages and sent them to us. Cathi and I just stared at those pages and read every word over and over and tried to imagine what she was saying, why she was saying it, what was going on, and of course, it only raised more questions for us. But, it was so good to get her letter. Her letter told us that she was alive, she was fine and that she loved us. If, after all of this time, we still had no letter, we would not be able to answer your questions about how she was doing, would we?

Do you see what the Bible is? It is God's letter to us. Without the Bible, we could only look at creation and realize that there is a God, but we really wouldn't know who he is, how he was doing, and that he loved us. Creation tells us that God is. The Bible tells us who God is. God is your Creator.

D. God is your Creator.

There is one God and this one God made you with a purpose in mind, and you know that. Intuitively you know that you are on this earth for a purpose. You know it because you try to discover what that purpose is. You ask that question about yourself. It all has to do with the question "why." Why am I here? What is the meaning of life? What is my purpose? What should I do with my life? The meaning of life is obviously connected to the origin of life, right? If you were simply a product that was designed and created to be used and thrown away, then your purpose would be - what? To be used and thrown away.

For example, let's say that you are a napkin from McDonalds and you have spent your life, as you know it, in a pile of other napkins, waiting to be shipped to a warehouse, then to a distributing center, then to a store, and finally to be placed into a dispenser, where you await someone, who only needs 2 but takes 8, to rudely crumple you up and throw you on his tray, only to wipe something gross off his shoes and then get thrown away. You then get placed into the trash, thrown into the dumpster, hauled away by a dump truck and left to rot in a landfill. Meanwhile, are you talking to the other napkins? Are you asking them about the meaning of life? Are you looking around at all of the little kids at McDonalds with copious amounts of snot and drool emanating from their orifices that you fear being used on, and you want to scream, "No!, there's got to be more to life than this!" Do you ask the other napkins if they ever dream of being something else, you know, like a ketchup packet, or a hamburger, or even a French fry? Do you look with envy at the pop dispenser because so many people seem to like it so much? No, you don't do that, because you are a napkin. You were made to be used and thrown away.

Many of you have been taught that you are the product of evolution. Evolution is a truth claim. If evolution is the means by which we all came into being, then you do not have a personal Creator, who has designed your life or this world with a purpose. That means that we are alone. No one is out there and when you die, you are done. You can scream into the universe, "Is anyone out there?" all you want and the only sound you will hear is

the faint echo of your own cry. But, if evolution is true, why would you even want to cry out? Fundamentally, therefore, evolution has no hope, no vision, no meaning, no song and no soul. There is nothing in evolution that gives you noble thoughts of forgiveness, mercy, pardon, love and joy. If you believe that you are nothing more than the "chance" product of evolution, then why do you dream dreams? Why do you hope? Why do you want your life to make a difference? Why do you feel shame? Why do you have guilt? Why do you live with a sense of dread? Why do you want to have friends? Why do you want to make your parents happy and proud? Why do people matter to you? Why do you want to be noticed? Why do you want to be appreciated? Why do you want to be included? If you are the chance and lucky product of "the survival of the fittest" why do you have compassion on those who are weak and care about people who suffer? Why would you cry when someone dies? After all, doesn't that mean less competition for the limited resources? Why does it matter to you if you live or die? Why do you think that there are some things are right and some things are wrong? Why do love and hate? Why do you feel like you need to be forgiven? Why do you wonder where you came from? Why do you wonder why you are here? Why do you wonder what is wrong with our world? Why do you wonder what happens to you after you die? Why does it bother you when people say one thing but they do another? Why does it bother you when people betray you, disappoint you, or hurt you? Why do you even ask questions that begin with the word "why"? If evolution is true, then there is no category for "why".

Do you see it now? The theory of evolution cannot hold the weight of your life nor support your dreams. The theory of evolution collapses under the weight of your innermost thoughts and questions. It does not make sense. Evolution does not make you sing. Evolution does not make you love. Evolution does not help you be forgiven, or free from shame. Evolution does not give you hope. Evolution is a purposeless and impersonal tyrant that tells you that you are nothing more than a napkin. You exist to be used and then to get thrown away. So, when the Bible says that "there is one God" (meaning that there is only one God and that all of the other gods and religions are frauds), while you may be tempted to think that the Bible is narrow minded and not very nice to other religions, do you see how wonderful, this truth really is? There is a God and He is the one true God and He can be known and be trusted and he has created you with hopes and dreams because he wants you to experience the reality that He is your personal Creator. He is your ultimate Father. He is your home. He is your origin. He is your designer and He is the only one who can fulfill you and satisfy you.

Now, I am about to move on in this text and make my second point. But, before I do that, if you are not a believer in Christ, and do not consider yourself to be a Christian, I wonder how this is sounding to you. My guess is that it sounds a bit narrow, exclusive, even judgmental in fact, and yet, do you not find it strangely intriguing, even interesting? I pray that you do. I realize that this goes against what many of you are taught. The prevailing cultural thought is that every opinion and viewpoint holds equal weight and credibility. Former president Bill Clinton was making a speech at Georgetown University and he said, *"Nobody's got the truth. You 're at a university which basically believes that*

no one ever has the whole truth, ever... We are incapable of ever having the whole truth. ...we think everybody counts"¹ That statement does not know what to do with an opinion or viewpoint that makes a universal claim on truth. Here is my little poke in the eye. The claim of evolution blows up the idea that all ideas are equally valid. You cannot say that evolution is valid and creation is valid. It is one or the other because both are universal and opposing truth claims. So, if you have been raised believing or trying to believe that all opinions are equally valid, the only thing you can do when someone makes a universal truth claim is to say that all opinions are equally valid, except that one.

So, let's test-drive that for a minute. Let's say that your philosophy professor teaches that all opinions are equally valid. Every person is entitled to his own opinion and no one can make a universal claim on truth. Then you go into your science class. Your science professor teaches you that you exist as the result of an infinitesimally small chance of a random particle explosion that occurred somewhere in space (that we don't know where it came from) between some molecules (that we can't explain where they came from either, nor how they met each other, nor why they would explode) but, this explosion started a process that billions and billions of years ago led to a universe of infinite proportions and even an earth of delicate eco-systems and humans with intricate bodily designs along with amazing social, emotional, and intellectual capabilities and that anyone who thinks otherwise is wrong. And you raise your hand and say, but in my philosophy class we are told that there is no right or wrong. Why can't I believe in creation? Because if you believe in creation, then you are saying that evolution is wrong (and we can't do that.) But, if you believe in evolution, are you not saying that creation is wrong? But, apparently that's ok to say that.

But if you say that, doesn't your philosophy fall apart? That puts you in a difficult position, doesn't it? But I hope that you recognize the difficulty of your position. If every opinion is equally true all at the same time, then it is impossible for you to know anything with certainty. So, on the one hand I can only imagine how a sermon like this affects you. I have just made a bold truth claim. There is one God (and only one God). You want to accuse me of being arrogant and bigoted, but on the other hand, I am presenting you with an objective truth claim that gives you a category of certainty and the idea of knowing something for sure, is, well, at least interesting, perhaps even attractive? Here is the next bold, truth claim from this text.

II **We can come to God, but only through Christ.** (5b-6)

A. **There is one mediator.** (5b)

What is a mediator? A mediator is a representative who seeks to bridge the gap between two parties. Do you remember in 4th grade when a girl would send a friend over to a boy, who would say, "Rosie likes you, would you like her?" That friend is a mediator. That

1. http://www.georgetown.edu/admin/publicaffairs/protocol_events/events/clinton_glf110701.htm

friend is trying to bring two parties together. A mediator is needed when a gap exists between two parties. In our case, there is a gap between us and God. So, God sent Christ to us. And while it would be cute and somewhat innocuous to think that God sent Christ to tell us that God likes you, would you like him? The truth is, there is a gap between us and God because we are rebels who have sinned against God. We have not sinned against a god amongst many gods, and now having sufficiently ticked him off, we can go back to the cupboard of world religions and pick out another one. There are no others. We have rebelled against the one and only God. There is one God. And this one God, who is our Creator, and is infinitely righteous and powerful, has the authority, the right, the position and the power to destroy us for our rebellion and for acting as if we do not need to listen to him. If God judged us, no one could judge God. But God sent Christ to provide a way for us to be forgiven and brought into a secure and eternal relationship with him.

B. Who gave himself for you. (6)

A significant part of the Bible tells us that God is the law giver and it tells us what his law is and it shows us that no one has ever kept his law. We have all rebelled against God. The evidence is so overwhelming that as Romans 3.19 says, we are rendered speechless. There is nothing for us to say. We have no excuse and no defense. But God is not only just and righteous, God is merciful. So, God sent Christ. Christ is the Son of God. God, the Son shares deity with God, the Father. Christ, as God, came to this earth and was born as one of us and as such, took upon himself humanity. The Son of God did not stop being God, but added humanity to his person, making him the God-man.

That was amazing! But he did not so much more. He not only came to show us what our Creator is like, he came as mediator. He came to restore the relationship that had been broken by our rebellion. Christ did that by living a perfect life. His life matched the law of God. He was innocent. He was perfect. And then, as a sacrifice to pay the penalty for your sin, and as a ransom to purchase your freedom from judgment, Christ died in your place. He gave himself. He gave himself over to death to pay for your sin, so that your punishment would be paid for, and you could be forgiven, forever and restored to your maker, and the true lover of your soul.

That is why there is only one mediator, because he is the only solution. No one else could forgive you of your sin because no one else can live a perfect life in your place. There is only one way to God. There is only one means by which you can be forgiven of your sin and it is through Christ. You must believe this truth and trust in Christ as your King and Savior. What do people tend to do with this truth? They want to argue how unfair it is that there are not many ways to God. The truth is, we ought to be utterly amazed that there actually is a way to God. Not only that, but what is overwhelming to consider is the fact, that it was God who took the initiative to design a solution to the problem that we had created. So, what do you do with these truths? They are given for you to believe. They are given so you can have your sins forgiven and be made a child of God.

Ken Gire tells the story of a little girl who lived on the edge of a forest. One day she determined that she would explore this foreboding place, and journeyed into the forest.

After a while, she became disoriented and got lost. She began to cry and scream, but no one it seemed heard her. Exhausted from crying and yelling, she fell asleep, alone in the woods. Friends and family members searched the woods for her until late into the night they gave up in order to resume the search in the morning. Early the next morning the little girl's father came into the woods and caught a glimpse of her sleeping on a rock. He ran to her calling her name over and over. His voice woke her up and she hugged him and said over and over, "Daddy, I found you. Daddy, I found you."²

When you discover who Jesus is and what he has done for you, we tend to think that we found him, because in a sense we did. But, the bigger story is that he came after us. He calls our name and then we find him. And when we find him, when we trust in him and in him alone, we are safe. We are home.

²1 got this story from Ravi Zacharias in "Jesus, Among Other Gods" p. 187-188. He footnotes where he got it from.