



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

September 3, 2017

Pastor Roy Rose

13th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Isaiah 56:1, 6-8](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 133-134](#)

Second Lesson: [Romans 11:13-15, 28-32](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 15:21-28](#)

Sermon Text: [John 14:6](#)

Do All Faiths Lead to The Same God?

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Friends in Christ, how do you feel about surveys? Do you like to find out how many, if not most, people are thinking about things? Or do you like the chance to express your own opinion? Or do you get irritated when one of those survey calls come just when you're eating supper or you're watching your favorite TV show?

Several years ago, some of our congregations were asked to fill out a brief survey after worship services. The survey was entitled "What I believe" and it contained 15 statements. One of those statements was this. *Although there are many different religions in the world, most of them lead to the same God.* Did the people in the church that day agree with that statement, disagree with it, or have no opinion on it?

Maybe filling out a survey on what we believe, even after a church service, is not the best time. Maybe some had to get somewhere, or do something and rush through it. Maybe that's why in one congregation five people marked down that they had no opinion at all on this important *question—Although there are many different religions in the world, most of them lead to the same God.* Or maybe we just need to keep reviewing what God tells us in his Word, because we hear and see so many conflicting ideas in a confused and confusing world around us. Maybe that's what led 66 other people in that church to mark that they actually agreed that *although there are many different religions in the world, most of them lead to the same God.* For whatever reason they did, it might be good for any Christian to review what God himself actually says about this in the Holy Scriptures.

When we look at the many different religions in the world, do all paths lead to the same God? The place to start answering this question is with the very first Commandment. God stated it this way when he wrote the Commandments on two tablets of stone and gave them to Moses. **"You shall have no other Gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth**

beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.” ([Exodus 20:3-5.](#)) That’s really plain language, isn’t it? But in case the people didn’t understand exactly what he meant, God reminded them 158 times in the Old Testament, “I am the Lord.”

For example, **“I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.”** ([Isaiah 42:8.](#)) **“Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior.”** ([Isaiah 43:10-11.](#)) And in our New Testament Era, the apostle Paul wrote, **“We know that ‘An idol is nothing at all in the world’ and that ‘There is no God but one.’”** ([1 Corinthians 8:4.](#)) It is God who identifies himself here, in his Word, as One God in Three Persons; the Triune Father, Son and Holy Spirit. So he is not Allah, or the Buddha or the Great Spirit, or Krishna, or BroMenn, or Baal, or Zeus, or some generic god without the Son and the Holy Spirit. He is not any other god that people have bowed down to. But he is the Three in One God, as we just sang this morning. We all believe in one true God; Father, Son and Holy Ghost. This true Lord and God, Jehovah, the Almighty, makes the very exclusive declaration in his Word, “I am the only God. Do not worship anything or anyone else.” That includes not only the false gods of other world religions. It also includes (as he says in his Word) your money, your pleasures, your earthly possessions, important people, yourself, and all the other things that people have set up in their hearts as their god. Someone has said the human heart is an idol factory. Don’t manufacture such idols in your hearts, God tells us, because “I am the Lord your God, the living God, the only God.”

How do you feel when you hear such exclusive statements? The exclusive isn’t always appreciated in our society, is it? For example, if there is an exclusive club somewhere, we might see on the news that there are people outside picketing because they want to get into that club. Or maybe we get turned off by the arrogance of someone making the exclusive claim, *I am the greatest. Or, it’s my way, or the highway. My way is the only way, and you’d better do it my way.* Or maybe we’re just a little skeptical of the exclusive advertising claim, *You won’t find a better deal anywhere.*

On the other hand, there are many different soft drinks, but there’s only one formula for Dr. Pepper or Coke. There are many different ways for frying chicken, but there is only one Kentucky Fried. And those exclusive recipes are strictly guarded. Once you get your new invention patented, you have the exclusive right to manufacture it. A teacher may see many different answers on a math test, but there is only one right answer to the math problem. There are several ways to score points, but only one way to score one point in a football game. There is only one base path to run on to get from home plate to first base in a baseball game. If something is exclusive, it excludes all others, all other ways, all other paths, persons, recipes, whatever. God makes very exclusive claims in his Word when he tells us there is one God, the Father of all, who is over all.

Now, if there is only one true God, revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, do all paths, or even most paths, lead to this only true God? Jesus says, “No. They don’t.” Because Jesus himself, as the Son of God from eternity, born into our human life to

redeem us from sin, makes a very exclusive statement here. He says, **“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** There is no other way to heaven. Jesus is the only way.

Jesus said this because his disciples were not sure. They were not doing too well on their Maundy Thursday evening survey. Jesus had told them on this night before his crucifixion that he was going away, to the Father’s house; that he would prepare a place for them and he would come back to take them there. Jesus said, **“You know the way to the place where I am going.”** ([John 14:4.](#)) In other words, *You know the way to the Father’s house in heaven.* But then **Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”** ([John 14:5.](#)) He and the other disciples had been following Jesus around for three years listening to his teaching and seeing his great miracles, but they still didn’t understand the main purpose of his coming to this world to do the work of saving us from hell’s curse for heaven’s blessings. *How can we know the way to heaven,* Thomas was asking. And Jesus gave a very exclusive answer. **“I am the way. No one comes to the Father except through me.”**

Jesus had said it other ways before. **“Whoever believes in God’s Son is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”** ([John 3:18.](#)) **“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life...”** ([John 3:36.](#)) Now he simply says **“I am the way...”**

No other founder of a world religion has dared to make such a claim. Other religious leaders have come along saying *I can show you the way, I can help you find the way, this can be the way, I can teach you the way,* or even those who have said, *There are many ways that all lead to heaven in the end.* But only Jesus Christ, the only begotten eternal Son of the Father, has been able to say **“I am the way...”** No wonder that after his resurrection and ascension back to heaven the followers of Jesus were called followers of “the way.” And even when they were being persecuted for that, they boldly proclaimed to their enemies, **“there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”** ([Acts 4:12.](#)) Jesus is the only way.

Just as he had said in the Old Testament, **“I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior”** ([Isaiah 43:10-11](#)), “I am God, your Redeemer,” so God in the flesh, Jesus of Nazareth, says to us, “I am the only way to eternal life and salvation with the Father in heaven.”

Isn’t that why his Law needs to be preached to all people so that they may see their sins and their need to repent? Isn’t that why his Gospel also needs to be proclaimed to the hearts of all people, so that all may see him as their only Savior from sin and believe?

The survey said, *Although there are many different religions in the world, most of them lead to the same God.* The choices were agree, disagree, or have no opinion. In that particular church, 172 people did mark down they disagreed with this statement. After studying the Word of God, we could add and check another choice—absolutely disagree because there still is only One who can say **“I am the way. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** The only religion that leads to the true God is the true Christian faith that we learn of his holy, inspired Word. His Word of truth.

Sometimes when we come to a fork in the road, it's difficult to know which way to take. Which way is going to get us where we want to go? When we see the many religious paths before us in this world, remember, although many different religions lead to many false and useless gods, only the Christian religion leads us to the true God and Father in heaven. And although many different religions in the world may claim that you can get to some kind of heaven by your own good thinking or good deeds or sacrifices or dedication to their cause, only the true Christian faith proclaims that we are justified by faith in Jesus alone.

As our Scripture lesson earlier today showed us, God's church is intended to be for all people of all nations, that all would repent and turn to him. But there is only one way into this holy Christian church. The way of faith in the living Savior. That's why we need to proclaim his saving Gospel to all nations.

Do the exclusive claims of some in this world turn you off? Don't let that happen when you hear Jesus' exclusive statement, **“I am the way...”** Or when his apostle says in the Book of Acts, **“there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”** ([Acts 4:12.](#)) But instead let such statements bring you the greatest comfort and peace.

By the grace of God, you know the way to heaven for yourself and for your Christian loved ones. You know the way of repentance for sins and faith in your Savior that endures to the end. As Jesus said to those who believe in him, **“...rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”** ([Luke 10:20.](#)) For by the grace of God, through faith in Jesus, you not only know the way, but you are on the way to your eternal home in glory. Amen.