
Is Jesus The Way, The Truth, And The Life?

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
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Last Sunday, our guest speaker at the Dean's Forum, the Reverend Bill Sachs, spoke to us about Christian-Muslim relationships. His travels and stories were fascinating, and he made the bold claim that he was a better Christian from having serious and sincere engagements with Muslims. Obvious questions emerged! Are we, as Christians, supposed to form relationships with believers of other faiths?

We will continue that conversation this Sunday in the Dean's Forum. I will review many of the principles I laid before the Dean's Forum last year. What does it mean to be a Christian in a world of growing religious pluralism?

In particular, I will preach this Sunday, and I will teach in the Dean's Forum, on the questions raised by the Gospel of John, chapter fourteen, verses five and six: *Thomas said to Jesus, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

Those verses have been part of my own Christian journey for as long as I have asked questions about the Christian faith. When I was in college, and worshipping with all sorts of other believers (in Southern California), I asked those questions. When I was leading street songs and prayers on summer beaches, the question asked of me the most often was: "Is Jesus the only way?"

I believe that the Bible, our Christian scripture, provides specific guidance about how to be faithful in a world of various religions. But the guidance is not exclusivistic. Time and time again in Christian history, God's people are surprised to find that God is present beyond their own religious boundaries. The Bible is very clear about this!

Thus, I will make the claim that Jesus is our Lord and our Savior. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (our gospel lesson for this Sunday). But those claims are not saying that the Christian Church is the only way to salvation, or the only way to God the Father. Jesus did not say the Christian Church was the only way to salvation.

God is always greater than that which we can perceive or define. Jesus, too, is much larger than our ability to define him. And Jesus is much larger than the Christian Church. To follow Jesus as the way and the truth and the life means to be on a wonderful and amazing journey.

I am aware that Pope Benedict XVI, the primate of the Roman Catholic Church, visits the United States this week. He is certainly a great man, and he leads a grand Christian tradition. But Roman Catholicism is not the only Christian tradition; it is not the only way to salvation. It is dangerous for any church or religious tradition, Catholic or Protestant, to presume that its way is the only way to salvation. The Anglican tradition has never claimed that, and I am glad we haven't!

It is Jesus who is the way, the truth, and the life. It is not me or you, or yours or my religion, which is the way. I pray that Jesus Christ leads all of us, all the whole world, to that life and grace which only a great God can provide.

Sam Candler signature





The Very Rev. Sam Candler

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