
Is Jesus the Only Way?

**An article for *The Cathedral Times*
by the Very Rev. Sam Candler, *Dean of the Cathedral***

Join me this Sunday in the Dean's Forum, as I continue a series titled, "Refreshing Christianity in Good Faith!" We will meet in the Good Faith Chapel at 10:10 a.m. for Part 3 of the series: a discussion one of the controversial questions of our Christian time: "Is Jesus the Only Way?"

It is the question about other religions. It comes in various forms. Maybe it is: "How does a Christian, explain other religions?" Or, "Do you really believe Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and do you really believe that no one gets to the Father except through him?" Or, in its most simple form: "Will people in other religions get to heaven?"

Sometimes folks use the question as an accusation, as a test, a simplistic way of determining if my brand of Christianity meets their standards. At any rate, surely you all know that kind of question. You do not live in today's world if you have not asked that question.

There are lots of ways to address, and to answer, the question; and I prefer to answer by using the Bible itself. In fact, I will address directly the famous verse, John 14:6, *Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

Let me deliver a clear answer in this preview. I enjoy a life-giving and progressive view of the Bible and of Christianity; and you might be surprised that I actually believe this provocative verse from the Gospel of John. I understand that many Christians are embarrassed by this seeming exclusivity of this verse, John 14:6; and that is too bad. Yes, I do believe Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Because, I believe that no one gets to the Father except through Christ, the Way of Jesus.

I am equally clear about something else. I also believe that other religions, in addition to Christianity, get to God, too. In fact, it is because I believe that Jesus is the Way, that I also believe that other faithful people besides Christians get to God, too.

This Sunday, I will present various passages of scripture that describe the people of God, whoever the "chosen" people of God are at the time, being surprised to discover that God is present in another people, another tribe, another form of religion! In this way, I believe the Bible ("the holy conversation" that I presented three weeks ago) describes good faith, over and over again, in ways other than their own way.

Let's hear from Jacob, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it!" Let's hear from Jesus telling the (foreign) Canaanite woman, "Great is your faith!" Let's hear from Jesus using a foreigner, a Samaritan, as an example of someone who loves their neighbor!

Let's hear Psalm 87 say:

"Glorious things are spoken of you, * O city of our God.

I count Egypt and Babylon among those who know me; *behold Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia:
in Zion were they born."

Is Absolutism the Way, or is Jesus the Way? I believe Jesus is the Way! Our faith is in Jesus the Christ. Jesus came to give us life – life above these absolutist polarities. Jesus came to give us truth – truth above these divisions. Jesus came to be the way – the way of saving grace that expands beyond our understanding. Jesus the Christ is the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to God except through that way of Christ, the way of God's wide and unimaginable mercy.

Join us on Sunday to discuss the way, the truth, and the life: The Way of Christ!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip

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