



St John Lutheran Church

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Text: Isaiah 44:6-8

Theme: There is no other God!

"Is there a God besides Me (says the Lord)? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one."

Christianity has always faced the opposition of pagan religions, and yet, there **is but one True religion**, for there is **but one True God**. **In great boldness**, Christianity has always claimed an exclusiveness that the world finds repugnant, but the Church does so **only because her Lord** claims that exclusiveness Himself. **Jesus Christ, the Only Son of God**, the only-begotten of the Father, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, says, **"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, and no one comes to the Father but by Me,"** and even so, God says, **"Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one."**

Christianity is exclusive, in that it worships the only True God and it teaches that there is no other way for a man to be saved from his sin apart from the Grace of God found **ONLY** in Jesus Christ. **Christianity is exclusive** because it claims to be the only Truth in a endless sea of half truths or truths that are no truth at all...**truths** that are lies and completely false. **Christianity is exclusive** because it's message is one of Grace, Grace and salvation that is a gift of God and given to the unworthy....**this** when all other religions offer only a message of salvation by works. **Christianity is exclusive** because our teaches us that we cannot save ourselves, so God must do that for us. **It's about what** God does for us...**not** about what we do for ourselves. **Christianity is exclusive** because God has done the work of salvation for us through Jesus Christ and it is that salvation that we must trust for there is none other...**and** to say that there is another way to be saved is to say that God didn't do enough... or that God is a liar and incapable of keeping His Promise of salvation!

At the same time, Christianity **is inclusive**, because it calls all men to be saved. **"God would have all men to be saved (the Apostle writes) and to come to the knowledge of the truth."/// "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever (white, black, brown, rich, poor, beautiful or ugly) that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."/// "There is no other name given among men by which we must be saved,"** and **this One given among men cries out, "Come unto Me all of you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."** **The Truth here** is that God wants all men to be saved, but many will refuse the invitation!

Christianity is exclusive, and yet, at the same time **it is inclusive**. **For so many years** God's people of old, Israel, taunted Him with her waywardness, and with her tendency to seek help in her battles... **not from** God, but from other nations and even from other deities. **In her actions** Israel showed herself unfaithful in the exclusive claim of her God. **In Isaiah's time**, it was Ahaz, the King of Judah who taught his people such unfaithfulness. **Sensing a threat** from the nations to his north and east, namely, Assyria and Babylon, Ahaz sought to make alliances with other nations, **rather than** to stand his ground in the fear and trust of God, confessing that there is no other God besides Him, and that He is the only Rock upon which the people could and must stand upon. **Ahaz fell into** the temptation of trusting the world rather than trusting in God's Promise!

The Word of God's displeasure came to Ahaz and ultimately to the people of Judah through Isaiah, the prophet. "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, Nor seek the Lord!" "Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away backward." "Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock."

God will not share His dominion, His kingdom with any other so-called god. He doesn't care what the world thinks is fair or reasonable. His Word and Command is His Word and Command!! Israel found that to be true when God allowed other nations, pagan nations, to come in and destroy Jerusalem and her Temple. Assyria and Babylon became instruments of God's chastening... that His people would understand that ultimate Truth and heed that Truth which is that He shares His throne with no other god and that apart from Him there is no other hope of salvation. Indeed, "Let all the peoples of the earth know (God says) that the Lord is God; there is no other."

Tolerance is one of the politically correct "watch words" of our day that makes God's Word in Isaiah 44 so relevant to us, especially in our time in history. Tolerance, in all things, is said to be a great virtue. This kind of belief, or politically correct smoozing and public pressure really puts Christians in a difficult position at times. Certainly in our society, in our culture, we are surrounded by various religions. We live in a country where we are granted such freedoms. The classic statement made by those who don't understand the Gospel of Christ... those who don't see that the only way to be reconciled to God is through the blood of His Son, is this, "all religions are the same, they are all worshipping the same God, but in different ways." Because we are a nation that allows religious freedom (and I do believe we should) the prevailing thought and politically correct posture is that all religions must be good. All must have some merit and some truth, for there is and can be no absolute truth in the spiritual realm...this is what the world would say to us. Further, if you happen to actually believe what the Bible says is true, that the only way to salvation is through Jesus Christ...you are said to be intolerant, narrow and even dangerous!! Even in our own LCMS!

A case in point is a letter to the editor taken from a recent issue of our own Synodical magazine, The Lutheran Witness. The letter is in response to an article in a previous issue, in which a pastor of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod said that "all other gods are false gods, nonexistent, the figment of men's imagination." The individual responding to that statement in the letter to the editor writes, "If Islam and Judaism believe in the God of Abraham, and the God we Christians believe in is the God of Abraham, how can you say the God of Abraham is a figment of men's imagination?"

The answer is simply this, God, as He has revealed Himself to us in the pages of His word, is a Triune God; He is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All three of the Creeds of the Church so clearly confess this teaching, and martyrs have gone to their graves defending it. To put it somewhat crudely, God is package deal, meaning, you cannot claim to worship the Father, this God of Abraham, and yet, at the same time reject the Son and the Holy Spirit. So...Does the follower of Islam or Judaism worship the same God as the Christian? Not according to Jesus, who says, "No one comes to the Father but by Me." Indeed, "and we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God..." and "whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father." You cannot have God the Father without the Son and the Holy Spirit and you can have none of the Triune God without Jesus Christ....and here Dear Friends, I would add that you cannot have Christ without His Teaching! You cannot say I believe in Christ and then ignore what that same Jesus teaches you in Scripture!

How should we Christians handle a form of religious tolerance that suggests all religions are the same, or that all religions are equally valid? **What should our** view of the world's religions be, knowing that Christianity is exclusive and that there is only One True God, and only "**one Name (that being Jesus) given among men by which we must be saved?**" Well, to begin with, we are, as the text from Isaiah says, to be "**God's witnesses, "Have I not told you from that time, and declared it? You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one."**

As those called out of this world of darkness into God's marvelous light, we, you, have been given the privilege, and the duty, to declare the wonders of God's salvation in Christ. **While we might**, in the end, respect a person in their belief, **we never** give credence to that belief, **for since God is true**, all others will be found to be liars. **Our place, in** this maze of world religions, is to be faithful to the True God...**our place** is to call the world out of darkness into the rays of the marvelous light of Christ. **It is to say**, in all boldness, "**there is no God's besides Him. Indeed, there is no other Rock."**

Tolerance never brings a person to faith! **Tolerance never rescues** a man's soul from the fiery pit of hell! **Tolerance may bring** temporary peace, but it will never bring lasting, eternal peace! For there is no peace and no unity and no Truth outside of Jesus Christ!!! "**Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and His Redeemer, the Lord of hosts; I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God."** This is **He** who gives faith! This is **He** who rescues a man, be he white, black, brown, rich, poor, beautiful or ugly, from the fiery pit of hell! This is **He** who brings true peace, lasting, eternal peace!

God; Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, is the Rock and there is none other. **On the day** when God rescued David, His servant, from all his enemies, David confessed this and nothing less; "**The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; The God of my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, My stronghold and my refuge, my Savior."**

God's claim's are exclusive, for He will share His throne, His dominion, with no other god. **But this same** God, the Rock of your salvation, calls you even today, to "**come unto Him**" with your burdens, with your troubles, and most importantly with your sins, and as your rock, He will crush all that would crush you. **He will render** impotent that which would threaten to harm you. **Indeed, on the** cursed Cross He Himself was crushed, and that broken body and flowing blood He gives you today that you might have, in them, and along with them, His forgiveness.

And I suppose that is what it all boils down to; forgiveness, that is. **No other religion** in all the world offers "**salvation by grace through faith,**" in fact, some even find the forgiveness of God to be repugnant, something that is beneath the image of the god that they have created in their own minds. **Many see our** Lord's Death as scandalous...**and** His Resurrection pure fantasy!! **The True God** however makes Himself known in Christ as Holy One who became the sinner, and the righteousness of the unrighteous. **And there even** in our sin and rebellion He comes to us through His Word, Baptism and the Supper...**and He** shows Himself to be the only Rock who will never fail us. "**Oh come (then), let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation, Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods."** In the Name of the Only True God, Father, Son + and Holy Spirit...Amen.

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