

“HOW CAN WE BE SAVED? CHRIST ALONE.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: John 14:6; Acts 4:12; II Corinthians 5:21; I Timothy 2:5-6; I John 2:1-2

Introduction.

We turn to another pillar of the Reformation this morning, Christ alone.

In some ways, this was the central emphasis of the Reformation. Scripture alone points to Christ alone. Faith alone is faith in Christ alone. Grace alone is the grace of God extended to us in Christ alone.

Once Christ was made central again in the church it changed a lot of things. Priests were redefined as pastors, all the fancy vestments were replaced with simple robes, the altar where Christ was re-sacrificed each week in the mass was replaced with a table for communion, and the pulpit was moved to the center as the ministry of the Word replaced sacramentalism.

So much changed at the Reformation that we aren't aware of and take for granted.

So, the central question this morning and always is, “Who do men say that I am?” That's the question. Who do people say Jesus is? And what do we do with this Jesus?

What comes to your mind when you hear the name Jesus? Probably not the Latin phrase, *solus Christus*. Christ alone means three things:

The only Savior, John 14:6, Acts 4:12.

Jesus stated it plainly:

John 14:6 I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

First, He says it in the positive, I am the only way, the only truth, the only life. Then He says it in the negative, there is no other way, no one can come to the Father except through me. My way, my truth and my life are the only way, truth and life.

Peter drove this point home in his sermon in Acts 4 where we read that Peter filled with the Holy Spirit said:

Acts 4:12 There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Really? Can we believe such an absolute claim like that today in our pluralistic culture? Do we believe that? Why do we believe that? Do we have reasonable evidence for believing that?

We could spend hours on the evidence but I will just highlight it quickly to remind us of the grounds for our confidence in making such an exclusive claim about Christ.

First, everyone who heard Jesus' teaching was amazed at the things He said. No one has ever spoken like Him. Just read the Sermon on the Mount again to get an incredible snapshot of His supernatural wisdom and truth. Everything Jesus said had the ring of divine truth. He is the smartest person who ever lived.

Second, Jesus made some startling claims. Before Abraham was, I am. He claimed to be the Bread of Life and whoever believes in Him will never thirst. He claimed to be the light of the world. He claimed God was His Father and He was one with the Father.

Third, no one lived like Jesus, in sinless purity and perfect integrity, without fault or stain or blemish. Though a Jew and born under the law, He never offered a sacrifice for His own sin, He knew no sin. He never prayed to ask for forgiveness.

Finally, of course there were Jesus' miracles. No one ever did the things He did. He walked on water and calmed a raging storm, He healed the sick, blind, deaf and lame, He fed five thousand, He cast out myriads of demons, He raised the dead and rose from the dead Himself.

Jesus Christ is utterly unique: the God-man, God's anointed Messiah, the Son of Man and Son of God, the only Savior.

C.S. Lewis had no patience for people who said Jesus was a great moral teacher.

“That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse.... You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to” (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Book II, *The Shocking Alternative*, last page).

Jesus is either a liar, a lunatic or Lord. Those are your options.

No one is like Jesus.
No one said what He said.
No one did the things He did.
No one claimed to be who He claimed to be.
There has never been and never will be anyone like Jesus.

The problem in our world is we are alienated from God because of our sin. But the good news is there is a solution to this problem, and it is found in the only Savior.

There is one way and one name. There is no other. That is why missions and evangelism matter so much, the eternal destiny of souls depends on it.

The only Sacrifice, II Corinthians 5:21.

To our previous list we could add no one died the way Jesus died or with the purpose that He died. Christ alone is the one and only true sacrifice for our sins.

Billions have died, hundreds of thousands have been executed, scores faced the terrible death of crucifixion, but no one every died like Jesus. He didn't die from old age or sickness or human weakness. He didn't deserve to die and He didn't have to die.

John 10:17-18 No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again.

For fifteen centuries since the time of Moses the people of God took goats and bulls and lambs and laid their hands on them as if to transfer their sin to them and then sacrificed the animal as a sin offering. The animal became a substitute, dying in their place, on their behalf.

Then Christ came to offer His life, the Lamb of God for the sins of the world, to be a ransom for many.

II Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Hebrews 9:26 He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

I Peter 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

Christ alone because He alone was sinless was able to die for sinners and satisfy the righteous and holy and just wrath of God and pay in full the penalty due our sin.

This is called the glorious exchange or wonderful exchange or great exchange.

The one without sin became sin so that those with sin could become as Him who was not sin. He became cursed so we could become blessed. He became death so we could have life.

On the cross Christ became a murderer, a liar, a thief, a rapist, an adulterer, a pornographer, a gossip, a cheater, a hater, an embezzler, a blasphemer, one filled with jealousy, envy, lust, greed, pride, impatience, anger, all of that and so much more. He became the vilest offender, He became sin to cover sin with His blood.

Isaiah 55:4-5 Surely, he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; ...
5 he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

He is the only sacrifice because He is the only complete, sufficient and final sacrifice. Earthly priests had to sacrifice every day. Christ's sacrifice was once and for all. It is finished. At that moment, the veil between the Holy of Holies was torn, it was done. No more did the high priest have to go in once a year on Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement, the day of asking God for the forgiveness of the sins of Israel.

There is nothing more to be done or added. He has done it all.

For Catholics Christ's work on the cross is not final and sufficient, it needs to be supplemented. They were saying Christ and, not Christ alone. The Reformers said no more Christ and purgatory, that place where souls were said to go to atone for unpaid sin. In Christ, there are no unpaid sins. No more Christ and indulgences to be purchased, no extra works to be done.

But we are still saying Christ and works done by us to win God's acceptance. Christ and getting my act together, Christ and trying to do better and try harder to be better. Christ and what others think or say.

Christ and says attempt; Christ alone says accept.

Christ and says try; Christ alone says trust.

Christ and says do this; Christ alone says it is done.

Christ and says it is about us; Christ alone says it is all about Him.

There is nothing we can do to get God to love us more or less. He loves us in Christ, it can't be increased or decreased.

The cross is the heart and soul of Christianity. On the cross Christ, our Savior died for our sins to forgive us our sins and to satisfy the wrath of God and make us acceptable to God and reconcile us to God. Believe this and you will be saved.

A child can understand it and a mature Christian can stand in awe of its depth and mystery. It is a pool a child can wade in and an ocean the depths of which we can never reach.

The only Mediator, I Timothy 2:5-6.

Since our one and only Savior has made His one and only sacrifice on the cross, He is now seated on the throne at the right hand of the Father and ever lives to make intercession for us as our only mediator with God.

Jesus pleads our case for us with the Father, the case of all who put their faith and trust in Him.

I Timothy 2:5-6 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all.

Hebrews 7:25 Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

A mediator is a go between and Jesus is the only one. No angels, no saints, no Mary, no earthly mediators for they are all sinners in need of a mediator themselves.

I John 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Romans 8:33-34 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

In legal circles there is a saying, “He who has himself for a lawyer, has a fool for a client.” That is absolutely true in the spiritual realm. To appear before the judgment seat of God without a mediator or advocate is utter folly. You will have no defense against Satan’s prosecution.

But is we have Christ, who can bring a case against us? Can the devil? Can he point to us and say to God look at this miserable sinner and all his sin? Jesus says paid in full. By His continual prayers Jesus will not lose a single one that belongs to Him.

This is why we pray in Jesus name, He is our one and only mediator, our only access to the Father. This is why we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19).

This is your assurance against all doubt, Christ alone is our all sufficient Savior, sacrifice and mediator, our advocate with the Father.

Implications and application.

In our pluralistic world, this article of Christian faith comes under constant attack. Even among evangelicals there is wavering about whether Christ is the only way of salvation.

Just saying Christ alone can make us feel a bit embarrassed or apologetic. It sounds so exclusive, narrow minded, intolerant. We are saying we are right and everyone else is wrong and that doesn't go over very well these days.

When we say that Christ is the only way to the Father and the only way to heaven that is a direct threat to the tolerance religion in America, that is an attack on the most basic tenet of social or secular religion, that everyone's beliefs and ideas and perceptions are equally good and valid.

I want to give all of you confidence that what we believe from the Bible is reasonable and true, there are very good reasons for believing it. The teaching and life and miracles and sacrifice of Christ have been made clear to us by the Holy Spirit through our faith in Christ and His Word.

Don't shrink back, don't apologize, realize that this is true to whom all the Holy Spirit will open up to believe. You hold to the truth and trust the fruit to the Spirit. This true will either make converts or enemies.

Our only other option is to deny Christ and who He is. If we take away Christ as the only Savior and only sacrifice and only mediator, there is nothing left to Christianity and no hope for mankind.

Christ alone is our Savior leading us to the only way to salvation.

Christ alone has paid for our sins through his death on the cross, once and for all.

Christ alone is the mediator with the Father.

Christ alone is God's solution for humanity's deepest problems.

Christ plus nothing. Christ alone.

This is the Gospel, the good news, rejoice in it, love Him for it, it is cause for worship.

Prayer: Holy Father, grant us to see and celebrate and rejoice in the superior worth of Jesus as our only Savior and sacrifice and mediator. Grant us to see the glory of His cross and the supremacy of His victory and the treasure that is ours in knowing Him and sharing in His cross and suffering. Give us courage and confidence in our battle with sin and what has already been purchased for us by His blood. Deliver us from evil and from every evil desire, make Christ our treasure and our pure pleasure.