



Isn't it a bit arrogant to say that Jesus is the only way to heaven?!

This is one of the questions we tackled during our Lenten Midweek Devotion services. In today's society there are seemingly thousands of things you could put your trust in to get to an afterlife. Being called 'arrogant' for saying that Jesus is the only way is one of the milder things you will be called. But it brings up the importance of being able to tell why He really IS the only way.

Jesus would frequently answer a question by asking another question - leading the person to figure out the answer for themselves. With that in mind, here's a question to ask in response:

"Would you say it's arrogant to tell someone "Four" is the only right answer to the question, 'What is two plus two?' I mean, there are literally countless other answers you could give..."

I'm not sure why, but people tend to put spiritual matters into the realm of opinion, not facts. The question I just listed is designed to help the person start seeing spiritual things from a different perspective - a factual one.

Here's similar objection to saying that Jesus is "the only way":

"Jesus said we should love everyone. It's not very loving to tell someone their idea is wrong, is it?"

Again, people in our day and age think that "love" is being accepting of any and every idea. The only "unloving" thing is to tell someone they have a wrong idea. So, here's a follow-up question to give them a different perspective on what "love" really is:

"Let's say someone is looking for the answer to "What is 2 + 2?" and they've come up with "3." Which is the "loving" thing to do? Let them continue to think that "3" is an acceptable answer OR help them to see how "4" is the right answer?"

If you need to, you might add:

"You let them keep thinking "3" is ok, and they are going to run into problems for the rest of their lives. That doesn't seem to be very loving."

Of course, when you claim Jesus is the only right answer, you also have to be prepared to give a reason why. So, why is Jesus the only right answer?

Jesus was the only one that dealt honestly with the thing that separated us from God in the first place. Our sin. ("Sin" is simply doing the opposite of what God designed us to do.)

To help them understand the idea that sin is harmful and needs to be removed, you might ask something like:

"Have you ever had some rotten fruit in the bottom of your fridge? (Some folks might not admit this 😊) Did you solve the problem by piling good fruit on top of it? Did it help to just pretend the fruit really wasn't that bad - or ignore it as though it wasn't there?" (Of course, the answer to all those questions is 'No. The only thing that solved the problem was getting rid of the bad fruit.')

“Sin is like that. It doesn’t do any good to try to pile up good actions on top of it. It doesn’t do any good to try to pretend it’s not a big deal. And it really doesn’t do any good to just ignore it as though it’s not there. Yet, those are how all other belief systems treat sin. Jesus is the only one who did something to remove it.”

Sin puts a barrier between us and our sinless God. That barrier has to be removed in order to bring us back together. Jesus removed the barrier of our sin, when He took our punishment for it - in our place. (We call that sin-removal, “forgiveness.”)

Keep in mind, your answers (or questions) might not result in the other person instantly responding, “You know, you’re right. I can see how Jesus is the only right answer!” But you’ve planted the seed of a different way of looking at it, and God can take that seed and make it sprout into faith at just the right time!

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net