

LIAR, LUNATIC OR LORD?
Sermon Series: "God on Trial –The Case for Christianity"
September 16, 2018 Rally Day –John 14: 1-6
The Church of the Covenant

A dear friend, elder from a former church of mine, and college professor, came up to me after Easter Sunday, when I used this great text from the Gospel of John, Jesus saying –*"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me"* (John 14: 6), and he said to me: "Stu, that is my least favorite text in all of scripture." His name was Bob. Well, Bob, other than that, have a Happy Easter. We sat down and had many multiple discussions over the years. There is nothing I enjoy more than a great conversation with a friend. I love him as a friend and Christian but we chose to disagree. But my point to my friend, Bob, the college professor, was –"How can there be a Happy Easter if Jesus is not the way???" I spoke these same words from the Gospel of John with absolute assurance over the grave of my dear Mother this past Monday, with the "sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord". Don't you want that kind of assurance in your life? Bob, don't you want there to be a truly HAPPY Easter? He's still my friend, praise God...

For the secular world it is offensive that Jesus claims to be the only way to the Father. What about Buddha? What about Confucius? What about Socrates? Aren't there tons of ways to get to God? Can't I cobble together my own way, my own personally constructed stairway to heaven? Can't I take a smorgasboard approach? Take a little of that? Reject a little of this? Stir in some internet spirituality? Something my friend told me over coffee? I mean, you know, everything on the internet is true and has great authority, right? Certainly base eternity on opinion and whim and shifting uncertainty and what you personally think is right? That's authoritative. That's wise. That makes sense. No it doesn't. Not at all. You would be amazed the number of people who have never read the sourcebook, who have never encountered the scriptures, who base what they believe about God and where they are going to spend eternity, on whatever the opinion and whim of the day happens to be. Would you go to a doctor who didn't read medical journals? Would you go to a psychologist who hadn't read Freud? Would you go to an attorney who never passed their law school boards? But you accept as true unfounded and ill-informed opinions about God and how to go to heaven. By the way, on Rally Day this is my little commercial for adult education classes; this is the day to commit your life to read the scriptures before you die. This is the day to pray to God, "Show me the truth that shall set me free". Because I am convinced that if you pray that prayer earnestly and read the scripture you would come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ...There's power in the Word of God, just most people have never taken the time to encounter it...

So this is God on trial. This is making a Case for Christianity. This is the preacher, the advocate for the Lord, the attorney for the defense making his best case. You never argue someone into the Kingdom. But we also need to be prepared to make a case for the hope that is within us. C. S. Lewis in his seminal book, *Mere Christianity*, says that you must take Jesus as He presents Himself in the scriptures. When He says "I am the way" then He is the way or He is not the Way. When He says "I am the truth" then either He is the Truth or He is not the Truth. When

He says "I am the life" He either is the life or He is not the life. When He says that you come to the Father through the Son, we come through a path, through a specific, unique way, through an open door, that Jesus has set before us, or we do not. There is a most specific WAY set forth in scripture. *"No one comes to the Father but by me"* claims Jesus. No one. That's either true or its not true. There is alas no in between, compromise position. He is the way or He is not the way. That's what He clearly presents to us in scripture. When He is asked by the high priest, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Living God?" and Jesus responds "I am". He either is the Son of God or He is not the Son of God. Truth is like that. It is indivisible. It cannot be divided. It is all true or it is not true. You cannot parse Jesus' words and make them go away. "I promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God." That's what is said and repeated when you're sworn in as a witness in a trial.

C.S. Lewis in his book *Mere Christianity*, says therefore that then Jesus either is a LIAR...or He is a LUNATIC...or He is LORD. Is He who He claims to be or not? If He is not Lord then He would be a liar. The worst kind of liar. A false prophet. He knows He is not the Son of God but He lies and claims to be the Son of God. Perhaps then you would agree with his stern critics in his day that he is Beelzebub, the evil one incarnate; the deceiver and the Father of all lies. He knows He is not the Son of God, not the only way to the Father, but He lies and has deluded countless generations of believers who have placed their faith and trust in them. Or if He's not a LIAR then perhaps Jesus is a LUNATIC? He isn't the Son of God but He believes Himself to be but He is a madman, an imposter, a poseur of the worst kind. He should be medicated and locked up, Or is He who He clearly claims to be? Is Jesus LORD? And then should He be LORD of your life? Then we follow HIM on a daily, hourly basis. A Lord is someone we follow. And we spend the rest of our lives worshipping Him and studying Him and praying to Him and trying to figure out what this means and why He has deigned to love even me...

A LIE can never be hidden for long. In our world lies spread faster than truth. You watch the news and people give up their best friends and work associates in a heartbeat. Nobody goes to prison for a lie. No one would die for a lie. I think the best case for Christianity is that everyone in the early church absolutely believed that Jesus is LORD. They lived and they died for HIM. Every one of the Apostles died a terrible death, with the exception of John the beloved, and never wavered on the truth. Never compromised and never recanted. No one ever disproved that Jesus was raised from the dead on that very first Easter nor that the disciples literally saw Him in His resurrection body. You wouldn't die for a lie. You wouldn't sacrifice and come to church and give generously and serve self-sacrificially if it weren't true. If Jesus were a LIAR or a LUNATIC wouldn't someone have cracked, given Him up, ratted Him out, gotten a plea deal for revealing He was a liar or a lunatic. But they didn't. And His disciples to this day, still do not either...Every one of the early disciples in the church sacrificed, went to prison and every one but one of them died for the truth that had set them free. Its evidence that demands a verdict.

Now there's a very specific way of coming to the Father through Jesus His Son. If you accept that the Bible might know a thing or two about God then you might just accept that the Bible knows a thing or two about how to get to God. It begins by having an encounter with the Living Christ. It may be in a circumstance in your life where you are hurting or grieving. It may be in a

conversation with a friend. It may be in an anguished prayer hurled out at the universe. It may be a thought that comes to you in the middle of the night. It might be a Bible verse that God Himself plants in your heart and mind and that you cannot get rid of. But then He asks You to repent and turn to Him. To invite the One who is THE WAY AND THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE to enter in. To understand that you'll never understand the deep mysteries of life without Him. You'll never get to God on your own. You'll never get to God on your own goodness, on your own knowledge, on your own merits. He must provide the Way and He has provided the Way. You'll never be able to cobble together a truth that gets you access to the Father. Because no one comes to the Father apart from Jesus. That's either TRUE or it's a LIE. Its either spoken by the LORD or by a LIAR or a LUNATIC. Right?

Moses could meditate on the law; Muhammad could brandish a sword; Buddha could give personal counsel; Confucius could offer wise sayings; but none of these men was qualified to offer an atonement for the sins of the world...Christ alone is worthy of unlimited devotion and service...Christ alone could bridge the gap of enmity and sin through His death...(R.C Sproul, Reason to Believe, pp. 44-45)

When I buried my dear Mother this past week I am so very grateful to God that she believed and I believe that death is not the end but through what Christ has done for us, we have life and new life and abundant life and ETERNAL LIFE in HIM! I shall see her again because indeed Jesus is "the way and the truth and the life" and my Mother has come to GOD through Jesus, her Lord. Because He promised. And I believe. That's my testimony and I'm sticking to it. How sad a day it would be if you relied on some sad smorgasboard of internet spirituality to get you through that day!

So, men and women of the jury, you must choose. Is Jesus LORD? Or is He a LIAR or a LUNATIC? Is it the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God? Or is it an utter fabrication meaning nothing? You must make the choice. *Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up as 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 to any patronizing conclusion about his being just a great human teacher. He Himself has not left that possibility open to us. (C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity)* Liar, Lunatic or Lord? The jury is out. What say you today? Amen and Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*

I am indebted to my friend and mentor, The Reverend Dr. Nathaniel Roe, and for his favorite sermon, "The Uniqueness of Christ", as inspiration for this sermon today.