

No Other Name

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 March 2025

Preacher: Stephen Murray

[0 : 0 0] So no surprises on the Bible passage that we're going to be looking at today. It's the same passage, exactly the same passage we looked at last week. It'll actually be exactly the same passage again next week. That's not because I think you guys are dull and I need to keep preaching the same sermon three times in a row.

It's just because there's a lot in this passage that we need to cover, and so we're doing it over three weeks. Acts chapter 4 and verse 1 to 22.

Luke, a companion of the Apostle Paul, writes this book, the book of Acts. And he writes this in verse 1.

He says,

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

[2 : 1 8] But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. And so they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together.

What are we going to do with these men? They asked. Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it. But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in his name.

Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or to teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, Which is right in God's eyes, to listen to you or to him?

You be the judges. As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard. After further threats, they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them because all the people were praising God for what had happened.

For the man who was miraculously healed was over 40 years old. This is the word of the Lord. Let's ask God's help as we study together. Gracious God, your word is truth.

[3 : 3 0] We ask that you would feed us this morning by this truth. This is our bread of life. We have no true life without it. And so, Holy Spirit, please take the words of Scripture and embed them in our hearts, changing and transforming us, making us like your Son, Jesus.

We ask for the special mercy this morning. For Christ's sake. Amen. So we carry on in the book of Acts, Acts chapter 4.

You'll remember that what happened was Peter and John went up to the temple to pray, healed a man who'd been crippled for most of his life. He was in his 40s. They preach a sermon to the crowd that gathers.

And the temple authorities are put out by this in a big way, but they don't want to deal with it straight away, so they put them in prison overnight. Next day, convene this group, the Sanhedrin, the ruling class of the Jewish authorities, to now do a religious inquisition with Peter and John, asking them, how is it that this has all happened and what is going on here?

And so we looked at the first part of that last week. We looked at Peter's rather bold answer in the face of this opposition from a group known as the Sadducees, a particular opposition.

[4 : 45] We looked at the nature of that opposition as it came to them. Today we're going to not look at a long session. We're actually going to look at one verse. And today's going to be a little bit different. Today's something of what we might call an apologetics sermon.

So apologetics is a term that's used in Christian circles to mean giving a defense for the faith. You might find books on apologetics. Nowadays it's really popular to have YouTubers who have apologetics channels who do all sorts of stuff and have apologetics conventions together and talk about defending the Christian faith in numerous different ways, philosophically, biblically, all sorts of different ways.

And so today sermon largely kind of fits into that genre of apologetics in that I'm not going to walk you all the way through the text. I'm going to talk about some philosophical things as well as we go along. But I want to introduce it this way.

It's rooted in this text. Peter here appears to have this, as the cool kids call it, a mic drop moment here. So the Sanhedrin ask him, by what power are you doing this?

Where is this coming from? They're not denying the miracle, but they're saying, where is this coming from? And his reply is something like this. It's all from Jesus. It's Jesus.

[5 : 58] It's in the name of Jesus. Jesus whom you crucified, but whom God raised to the dead, from the dead. Jesus whom you rejected, but the Jesus who turned out to be the cornerstone on which all of salvation is based.

That's his kind of mic drop moment. You listen to that. If you're in the audience, you're like, oh, he's got them. He's nailed these guys. They're in a corner now. They've got nowhere to go. But then he goes and he seems to really poke the bear straight after that.

Look at verse 12. So you might have missed that verse last week when we read this passage.

But that is a very, very, very big claim. That's not a throwaway comment. That is an enormous claim. He's saying if you don't have Jesus, you're outside of salvation.

If you don't have Jesus, you're outside of salvation. That's not going to win you friends and sympathy from a group of people who just a few weeks, few months maybe earlier, had condemned Jesus to die.

[7 : 09] That same council. And you know what? 2,000 years later, it's still one of the most controversial and offensive claims of the Christian faith. And so I want to spend some time thinking about that this morning.

Now, a lot of what I'm going to say, at least in terms of conceptually and the arguments I'm going to give, is very indebted to a chapter in the book, *The Reason for God*, by Timothy Keller. So those of you who've done our Reason for God series in the past, I know the last time we did it was several years ago.

So maybe most of you have forgotten. At least those of you who were there have probably forgotten it and the rest of you weren't around back then when we did it. But some of the arguments might at least sound familiar along those lines. If you've never read the book, *The Reason for God*, I would really encourage you to get hold of it and read it.

It's a great look at certain objections that people bring to the Christian faith. But here's what I want to do. I want to talk about the bigger problem we have that a verse like this poses.

And then number two, I want us to see how this verse itself actually solves the problem. So the bigger problem and then how the verse solves the problem. Here's the problem. A lot of people look at Christianity, they look at verses like this verse here in Acts chapter 4 or like Jesus, for example.

[8 : 18] This is not a unique verse in this sense, but Jesus in John's Gospel when he says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me. A lot of people look at those sorts of verses in the Bible and they say, I can't believe in a religion that claims to have absolute exclusive truth about God and about this universe.

It just feels like a little bit too judgy. Or the people who are going to hold those sort of convictions are going to be a little bit too judgy. After all, aren't all religions essentially the same thing? Aren't we all really accessing maybe the same God in different ways?

How can Christians say only their way is right? Isn't that arrogant? It sounds like it would be arrogant. And when you hear an objection like that, or maybe you've even voiced that concern in your own heart, it's important, I think, to try and get behind the objection.

Where is the objection coming from? Put yourself in the shoes of a person who would have such an objection. And I think there are actually some good impulses there behind this. So a lot of people, for example, look at this world.

They look at history and they see how much conflict and suffering has come from people holding tightly to exclusive truth claims, particularly religious exclusive truth claims.

[9 : 32] And they look at all of that and they say, well, I don't want that. I don't want to be part of a world that's full of that. I mean, this is not even just evident at the sort of macro historical point of view.

You probably feel something of this in your interactions with your family and your friends and your colleagues to some extent. Think about a moment at a family bribe where you go to a family bribe and that one uncle comes along and he shares his opinions very strongly about politics or economics or current affairs or some particular group of people over there.

And you're sitting there and you're listening to him strongly pronounce his convictions on this thing. And you're there and your views, your own personal views are irreconcilably opposed to his views.

Now, in that moment, as that's happening, you've got one of two options right there. You can speak your mind with conviction and you can watch the family bribe implode, as my wife has had to do a couple of times.

Or you can keep your view to yourself and hope that the conversation just kind of moves on quickly and everyone forgets what we were talking about. We instinctively feel that in us.

[10 : 53] We feel that views about truly important matters, if held and expressed too tightly, necessarily result in conflict. And to some extent, I think that's actually right, that intuition is right.

I think that exclusivism, and perhaps particularly religious exclusivism, does often tend to cause that sort of a problem. If you think about it this way, if you've got a set of rules and regulations or a collection of doctrines, beliefs that you're saying to yourself, if I practice these things, if I practice these things right, then I get exclusive access to God, to the true God, the one true God.

If you hold on to something like that, well, then surely you have to judge people who practice differently, differently to you. You have to discriminate against them because you believe they're wrong.

And that's going to cause conflict. So this is a very real-world problem. Generally, the kind of broader Western post-Enlightenment world has tried to deal with this problem in two ways.

Pluralism and privatization. The pluralism of faith and the privatization of faith. Here's the first one, pluralism. And the first way they try to solve this problem is by saying, well, let's try and remove exclusivity.

[12 : 17] If we can show that there's no real need for religions to be exclusive, well, then we get rid of all the conflict, right? Then everyone will get on. Now, the immediate problem with attempting to get rid of exclusivity is that just a kind of casual glance at the major world religions will tell you that they're actually all really different from each other.

Judaism and Islam have one God. Hinduism has many gods. Buddhism has no God. And that's just kind of the tip of the iceberg in terms of differences. So surely they can't all actually be that different from each other and be equally valid.

That would be illogical. They could all be wrong. Or one of them could be right and the others be wrong. But they can't all be right. They're too different. So really you actually need a slightly more sophisticated version of pluralism.

One of the ways this more sophisticated version of pluralism comes to us is through an ancient Indian fable that you maybe have heard before about a group of blind men and a king and an elephant. So there's this rich king and in his court he stations an elephant and he brings in six blind men, blind from birth.

And he positions them at different places around the elephant to hold on to different parts of the elephant. It's obviously a very tame elephant. It doesn't do anything weird to them. And they all touch parts of the elephant.

[13 : 39] And then he says, okay, tell me, what have you got in your hand? And so one man who's got the trunk says, well, this is probably an industrial fire hose. Because in ancient India they had industrial fire hoses.

This is probably an industrial fire hose. That's what it feels like when I've got it in my hand, yeah? It's even a little bit wet at the end. It must be an industrial fire hose. Then the other guy who's got the leg, he's like, no, this is a tree trunk. This is clearly a tree trunk.

The guy who's got the ear is going, this is like maybe one of those big banana plant leaves or something like that. And the guy on the tail, well, this is rope. I've got rope in my hand.

It's frayed at the end, but it's a rope. And so you might look at all of these different guys and say, well, they're actually all still touching an element.

But their conception of their different parts is quite distinct from each other. True, but distinct. You look at this and appropriate it to religious faith claims and you say, well, it might look like all these different faith claims are so different from each other.

[14 : 42] But they don't have to be exclusive. Because each of us, what we've really got is we've just got a corner of the truth. A corner of the market. And so we believe sincerely and we've got real reasons for believing why we believe.

But it's only part of the picture of what's actually going on. We're only seeing a corner of the truth and that's why we come to the different conclusions that we come to. The guy holding onto the leg really, really does think he's holding onto a tree trunk.

The theory then is that if we would just humble ourselves and realize that none of us has the market on truth, we each only have a corner, then we would be much more tolerant of each other. Now, Leslie Newbigin was an Anglican bishop who worked in India as a missionary for many, many years.

And probably most of his ministry career, actually. And he'd often hear this story about the king and the elephant and the six blind men. And he started thinking about it. And then one day, he realized, hang on.

If you think about the story very carefully, there's a major problem to the story. And the problem that he found was this. You can only point out that each one of the men has got one part of the elephant if you yourself are claiming to be in the position of the king, seeing the whole elephant.

[16:05] See that? In which case, you are making a pretty exclusive truth claim about what true truth is. About what ultimate reality is.

You're saying, I can see what ultimate reality is. And you've only got a portion of it, everybody else. All of you are involved in all the other world major religions. You've just got a portion of it, but I can actually see the whole thing.

Which is just as exclusive and just as absolute a truth claim as anybody else who's standing there holding a part of the elephant. So Newbigin says this, he says, There is an appearance of humility and a protestation that the truth is much greater than any of us can grasp.

But if this fable is used to invalidate all claims to discern the truth, it is in fact an arrogant claim with the kind of knowledge which is superior that you have just said no religion has.

If you say, each religion only has a corner of the truth, and we really shouldn't be exclusive or arrogant about our particular corner, then you are claiming to be king.

[17:09] You're claiming to be the person who can stand above the rest of us mere mortals, see all the other world religions, see all the intricacies, see their history, see their nuances, and say, well, you're all floundering for a little part of the truth, but I can see the whole picture.

That is not humility. That is actually supreme arrogance. And it has just as much chance of breathing conflict and discord as any other exclusive truth claim.

In fact, it actually might be the most patronizing truth claim of all. So we're back to square one then. Exclusive religious claims clashing with each other.

That is, I think you can't really get rid of exclusive claims in this world. Cluralism, the idea that all religions ultimately lead to the same outcome, it doesn't work because it falls in on itself philosophically and practically.

It just doesn't work. And so the broader Western culture said, well, if that doesn't work, if we can't remove the exclusive nature of religion, maybe we can hide it.

[18:14] Maybe you hear this term a lot today. You hear the term secularism. What does that exactly mean? What does secularism mean? What does it mean to say that there are growing levels of secularism in a society today?

Don Carson is a New Testament professor, but has also written a lot on Christ and culture books and that particular field. And he says this, he says, secularism is not the absence of religion, but the pushing of religion to the margins, out of the public sphere and into the private sphere.

So it's really the privatization of religion. And not so long ago, there was a very controversial figure in the justice system of our country.

Maybe you remember him? Former Chief Justice Mkhweng Mkhweng. He often came in for a lot of criticism from various quarters in the media and in society, mainly because he is, to this day still, an openly and self-declared Christian, and he often spoke about his faith.

And more than that, he often even talked about bringing his faith to bear upon the justice system in South Africa. When he retired in 2021, Jonathan Zapierro, the well-known satirical cartoonist, drew a sketch portraying Mkhweng leaving office and taking all of his religious views with him, and then somebody shouting from the Justice Department back at him, there was never any place for this in your office.

[19 : 50] That's what Zapierro articulated in the Daily Maverick. Now, his issue was not that Mkhweng was a Christian. It's not his issue. But rather with the idea that Mkhweng would dare to bring any semblance of Christianity into the field of law.

That was the issue. Now, that is the privatization of religion. You can't bring your view of morality or of truth into the public sphere, well, because it's based on faith.

So you can't do that. Just because it's based on faith, you have no way of adjudicating it. We have no way of adjudicating it. You can't go into a lab somewhere and do a science experiment and adjudicate on that.

The assumption is that if you bring faith into the public sphere, it's going to cause controversy and it's going to cause conflict. Late American philosopher Richard Rorty put it this way. He said, To ever use an argument grounded in a religious belief is simply a conversation stopper, which the non-believer cannot engage.

So his view is that we should only actually ever bring into the public sphere what can be tested, kind of what we know works. So it's a very, very pragmatic approach then. Lowest common denominator, pragmatic approach.

[21 : 05] Now, Rorty and Zapiro are all basically saying this. They're saying, I really don't mind if you've got religious beliefs. I don't mind if you guys go to church on Sundays and you read your Bibles and pray to Jesus during the week and that.

I don't mind if you do any of those things. Just don't bring it into the actual public sphere. Now, there's a problem with this. The problem is this.

I think it is impossible to not bring religion into the public sphere. And I'll actually go a step further and say I think it is impossible for Richard Rorty and Zapiro himself to not bring religion into the public sphere.

Because, friends, what is religion? If you ask a religious person, what is religion? They're probably not going to say, well, it's the robes we wear. It's the rituals we do. It's the practices. It's the buildings. It's the temples.

It's the mosques we go to. They're going to say it's the core convictions, right? It's the values. It's about how my religion interprets ultimate reality for me.

[22 : 09] It tells me what true truth is. You see, at its core, at its essence, it's not the rituals. It's not the practices. It's a set of answers. That's what religion is.

A set of answers to the very big questions in life. Why are we here? Why are we like we are? Where are we going? What is this world about? Those are religious questions. Nobody can operate without some semblance of an answer to those questions, even hardened atheists.

And those answers are all at least implicitly religious because those answers can't be arrived at in a lab. You can't do an experiment to get an answer to why are we here.

Why should I be good and not bad? There is no experiment that can tell you the answer to that question. Where is this world going? There is no experiment that can do that for you either.

Which means then, everybody is bringing their faith assumptions into the public square and you and I cannot avoid it.

[23 : 13] Nobody can avoid it. Richard Rorty couldn't avoid it when he was alive. Zapierra can't avoid it now every single time he draws a cartoon. See, there is a sense in that whatever you think about Mkhweng Mkhweng's assertions, and you can have lots of reservations about how he applied his religion or what particularly he believed.

I have reservations about how he applied and what exactly he believes in the public sphere. But whatever you think about that, he's actually just doing what everybody else does. What everybody else does. Michael Perry, who is a law professor at Emory University in Atlanta, he writes this.

He says, to say religious reasoning must be kept out of the public square because it is faith-based and controversial, is itself a faith-based statement, which is incredibly controversial, and therefore on its own terms ought to be thrown out.

See what he's saying? It folds in on itself. Let me give you just one example of this, a practical example. Say we in this country decided to rewrite our divorce laws around marriage.

Say we thought, no, our divorce laws are inadequate. We want to rewrite our divorce laws, but we want to make this a very inclusive process, so we want to get everybody in the country to give their opinion on what the divorce laws should be.

[24 : 34] How are you going to script those laws? If you come from a very kind of Western individualist mindset, particularly what I mentioned earlier, that post-enlightenment mindset, where the individual is king, the individual is ultimate, then flourishing and happiness of the individual is most important to you.

That's kind of the highest goal. If the individual is not happy, if the individual is not flourishing, then things are not good. That's your definition of wrong and right. If that's you, if that's your mindset, well, my guess is you're generally going to make divorce laws relatively easy.

Get in and out of marriage fairly easily. To ensure your faith's assumption about how human beings flourish. That's what you're going to do.

But if you come from a more conservative or traditionalist mindset, where your family is ultimate, where you think human flourishing comes about best, when nuclear families are tightly knit, when extended families are working together to support each other, to raise children, to teach morality as you raise them, well, then you're going to make divorce extremely difficult, aren't you?

So as to ensure your faith assumption about how human beings flourish. You're sitting there saying, well, I think human beings work better when we're in social units and we're bonded together with strong covenants.

[25 : 58] Well, that's your assumption. That's your faith assumption. And so who's right? Who gets to decide that? How do you test that in a lab? You just can't keep religion out of the public sphere.

We are constantly bringing faith assumptions to bear on everything that we do. All of the time. Whether we go to church on Sunday or we don't. The whole idea of the privatization of religion is just impractical.

It really doesn't work. What usually actually happens in society is that one dominant set of answers to those religious questions comes into power and tends to push the others out to the margin.

And so I think we can't get away from exclusive faith claims. I think it's impossible. And that's very problematic then.

Because we know that when exclusive faith claims clash, they cause conflict and they cause pain. What do we do? Well, I think the Christian faith at its core gives us resources to be able to overcome the nasty side effects of exclusive faith claims.

[27 : 14] Things like conflict and discrimination and marginalization, self-righteous attitudes, bigotry, hatred, all of those sorts of things. Because Christianity at its best has within it unique resources to make us more accepting and gracious and welcoming as people.

And it has those resources because of at least two unique things that we see in the Bible. And they're in this verse that no other religion or faith actually has. And that is the unique nature of its founder, Christianity's founder, and the unique nature of the salvation that is offered in Scripture.

So go back to that verse 12. Peter says in front of that Sanhedrin, salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

Now, that Sanhedrin wouldn't have actually balked at the idea of exclusivity. I mean, they believed, as good Jewish people, that there was only one true God.

They would have daily recited something like the Shema, Deuteronomy 6. Here, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. That's the basic faith commitment, the basic confession of a first-century Jew, that there's only one God, there's one Lord.

[28 : 28] One Lord. Their issue wouldn't have been with exclusivity per se. Their issue would have been with Peter's contention, well, that Jesus is that Lord. He's that Lord come to be amongst us.

That's throughout Peter's sermon in chapter 3. If you go back, I know those sermons were a long time ago when we looked at Peter's sermon, but if you look at his sermon in chapter 3, that's his astonishing claim. He's saying that God, the one Lord of the universe that we talk about in the Shema all the time, well, he came into this world in the person Jesus Christ.

Jesus is Lord. You see, every single other religion in this world essentially has a founder who was a prophet or some sort of great person coming to show people how they can reach up to God.

But what we have in Christianity is completely different. You have the founder, God, coming into this world as the man Jesus, not to help humanity find God, but to be God finding humanity.

It's a big difference. Very big difference. Every other faith system essentially has a founder that says, and this is true not even for religions, this is true for ideologies to some extent.

[29 : 44] But every other system out there really says you've got to find your way to God or to enlightenment or to human flourishing, and this is how you do it. And then they give you rules, and they give you regulations, rituals, commands, a diet plan, something.

Do these things, and your life will be better, and you'll find nirvana and salvation, whatever it is. Only in Christianity do we have the founder coming to find humanity.

Now, if you are part of a faith system that says you have to find your way to God, it's on you to find your way to God, the minute you pick your particular pathway to God, well, the minute you do that, it's going to start, I think, producing a self-righteous attitude inside of you.

Because if you say, this path that I am on, by which I find God, is my path, well, then you surely, surely, surely, surely, have to judge the person next to you who's using a different path to find God.

You have to. You have to exclude. You have to divide. Because you have to believe that your path is superior to theirs. That's why you, in your wisdom, chose this particular path and not that path.

[31 : 02] That's why you're on this road and not that road. Because you looked at the two paths and you said, I think this is a better way to find God. I'm going to go here. Your way must be inferior by definition. This is my way to find God.

But if the founder of the faith comes and he finds you, when you weren't even really looking for him, well, that strips you of self-righteousness, doesn't it?

What righteousness are you going to stand on then? I'm so lucky. I'm so lucky. Strips you of self-righteousness. Towards those around you who are attempting to follow other paths to try and find God.

Because you can't turn around to them. You can't turn around to that man or that woman on another path and say, my way of finding God is better than your way of finding God. Because you didn't have a way of finding God. You were bumbling around in the darkness and God had to come and find you.

And so with that knowledge, we can't possibly be judgmental, at least judgmental in terms of our spirit and our attitude towards those on different paths. We might disagree with them and we should disagree with them. We should point out what we think are unhelpful things in other paths.

[32 : 18] But we can't be arrogant and self-righteous in that disagreement. If anything, we should be filled with humility and sympathy, being willing to gently and humbly share how God and his grace reached out to us to find us.

You see, the nature of the founder of Christianity completely pulls the rug out from underneath us when it comes to being self-righteous towards other faiths. It doesn't mean we're not critical of other faiths or should not be critical of other faiths.

It doesn't mean we can't point out errors and say, I think this practice is really harmful. I think this belief is really harmful. But we do that in a spirit of understanding we didn't get to be where we are because of anything other than the grace of the founder coming to find us.

But then the Bible actually goes further than that. You see this if you consider the nature of the salvation that's presented in Scripture. So go back to that verse 12.

Peter says, Salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. The key word there is given. No other name given to mankind by which we must be saved.

[33 : 22] See, the Christian message is this. If you repent and you turn away from a life lived apart from God ignoring God and you place your faith your life your trust in Jesus Christ and His death and His resurrection on your behalf then you will be reconciled to God.

That is Christianity 101. That's what all the members were affirming this morning as they stood up here that they believed that truth. Now here's the astonishing thing from Acts 4 that is in verse 12 is that verse 12 is not just a statement that Peter makes about the nature of salvation it's actually an offer.

It's an offer of salvation. He's actually holding out the gospel offer of salvation to the Sanhedrin to the very men who crucified Jesus Christ.

Peter is not standing there trying to win a theological argument. He wants these people to be saved to trust in Jesus. He's holding out the offer of salvation to the council that crucified the Lord of life a couple of weeks earlier.

He's saying Christ whom you crucified the stone that you rejected well he's the name given by heaven by which you might be saved.

[34 : 39] It's a very it's an incredibly gracious offer of salvation made to the enemies of God. That's exactly what the apostle Paul says in Romans chapter 5 verse 8.

God demonstrates his own love for us in this. While we were still sinners Christ died for us. He doubles down a few verses later verse 10. While we were God's enemies we were reconciled to him through the death of the son.

While we were God's enemies. You can look at the Sanhedrin and go oh those are the boogeymen those are the enemies but Paul is saying while we were enemies we you me prior to coming faith he reconciled us to himself.

A gift from heaven given from heaven the verse says. God doesn't wait for us to get on side with him before he sends his son. Jesus died for us while we were still sinners while we were enemies.

Jesus dies for his enemies. He gives himself long before you decide in your wisdom to go to church long before you decide oh I'm going to go read an apologetics book about pluralism and privatization and decide if I really believe in this Christian thing or that long before you make any of those decisions when you are at enmity with God in your mind the Bible says Jesus dies for you.

[35 : 54] He offers himself for you. That free offer of grace is for you. Now friends that means not only in the Bible do we have resources to be incredibly tolerant and accepting of those who don't share our faith.

It actually means in the Bible we have resources that enable us to give ourselves sacrificially for the good of people who don't share our faith.

Not to enter into conflict with those people but to give ourselves sacrificially for the good of those people who don't agree with our exclusive truth claim. The death of Jesus for us empowers us and instructs us and motivates us to give our lives in love in care in service of all people around us whether they believe in Jesus Christ or not.

Whether they agree with us or not. As Christians do we make an exclusive truth claim? We do. Yes we definitely do.

The Bible does. Jesus does. Jesus says I am the way the truth and the life no one comes to the Father but by me. Peter says there is no other name there's not like some options there's no footnote on that anywhere with a list of exceptions.

[37 : 09] There's no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. It doesn't get more exclusive than that but the truth on which this claim is based is so unique that it should force us to be the most outward faced people on the planet.

The most reconciling people on this planet even though we carry that exclusive truth claim in a world of competing exclusive truth claims. There should be love there should be care there should be service bursting out of the Christian community as we consider that Christ gave himself sacrificially for us when we were ideologically opposed to him.

If he did that for us how can we not do that for other people? If Peter can hold up this gracious offer of salvation to a group of people who murdered his Lord who then also put him in prison that night for healing a man then how can we not do that for other people?

Let's pray. Lord we have a wonderful salvation in Jesus Christ but it is a humbling salvation which is I suppose why the first step into receiving this is repentance because what we acknowledge in embracing the salvation that comes in scripture is that we did not bring about the salvation it is not our doing in fact we did the opposite we created the need for salvation in the first place by ignoring you by running away from the God who created us and so this great salvation that comes to us in scripture is a salvation that brings great humility to our hearts when we understand it and so it should bring great humility and compassion in us when we look around at others who don't trust in Jesus Christ we should long for them to come to know the love of

Jesus we should long for them to know the forgiveness and the hope that comes from Jesus how they can be turned from being enemies of God into being friends of God but as we carry that message Lord your gospel word must shape the manner in which we bring it to bear and so that that excludes sort of violent conflict unjust discrimination bigotry and hatred it requires us to have the same attitude as Christ who died for us while we were sinners while we were enemies father help us as a church to model that it's not easy especially when people would mock the church and mock religious faith as happens in our country from time to time help us to display Christ in those situations and to be consistent in our witness here around this and Lord

[40 : 15] I pray for any person who is sitting here this morning who listens to these things and has wrestled with the exclusive claims of Christianity I pray that you in your heart would remove objections and bring them to faith in the name that is given from heaven from which salvation comes our Lord Jesus Christ we ask this for Christ's sake in his glory Amen