

# Isn't Christianity Exclusive and Arrogant?

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] The scripture reading comes from the Gospel of John chapter 4, starting at verse 1. Please follow along in the screen or in your Bible. Now, when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples, he left Judea and departed again for Galilee.

Then he had to pass through Samaria. So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well.

It was about the sixth hour. A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, Give me a drink, for his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

The Samaritan woman said to him, How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria? For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

Jesus answered her, If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, Give me a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.

[ 1 : 2 0 ] The woman said to him, Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get the living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob?

He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock. Jesus said to her, Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.

The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water, welling up to eternal life. The woman said to him, Sir, give me this water so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.

Jesus said to her, Go, call your husband and come here. The woman answered him, I have no husband. Jesus said to her, You are right in saying I have no husband, for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband.

What you have said is true. The woman said to him, Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.

[ 2 : 3 8 ] Jesus said to her, Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know.

We worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.

For the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. The woman said to him, I know that Messiah is coming, he who is called Christ.

When he comes, he will tell us all things. Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he. Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, What do you seek?

Or, Why are you talking with her? So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did.

[ 3 : 45 ] Can this be the Christ? Amen. Amen. Great. Good morning, everybody.

And it's wonderful to be with you again this morning. Again, if you're new to Watermark and you don't know me, my name is Kevin. I'm one of the leaders, one of the pastors here. And it's wonderful to be able to be with you this morning.

And to kick off our new series that we're starting called, Why Christianity? For the next couple of weeks, we're going to be exploring some of the questions and the difficulties that we have when we consider the claims of Jesus Christ in the Bible.

And so we're so glad that you're joining us this morning. And we're looking forward to the next couple of weeks. Now this morning, we're looking at the question, Isn't Christianity exclusivist and therefore arrogant?

Isn't Christianity exclusivist and arrogant? You may have heard the story. It's based on an old Hindu parable from many, many years ago that says there were four blind men walking through the jungle.

[ 4 : 52 ] They stumble across an elephant, a very tame elephant. And each one of them takes an aspect of the element and feels it, trying to work out what it is.

And so the first blind man grabs hold of the trunk and he says, This thing is long and narrow and bendy. It feels a little bit like a snake. The second man grabs a tusk and says, No, no, no.

This thing is hard. It narrows. It's got a point on the end. This thing feels like a spear. The third man grabs the ear and says, No, this is flat and wavy and it creates air movement like a fan.

And the fourth man grabs the elephant's leg and says, No, no. This is hard. It's solid. It's sturdy. It feels like a tree trunk. And so the parable says, Well, they're all partly right, but they're all partly wrong.

Wouldn't it be arrogant? Wouldn't it be exclusivistic for any one of them to say, I have the answer. I am right. I know what's going on here. Sometimes when we think of religion and faith, it can feel a little bit like that.

[ 6 : 01 ] When somebody says, I believe something to be true, we tend to think that all religions are fundamentally the same, superficially different. They're all heading in the same direction.

And it's simply arrogant. It's exclusivistic for one person, one faith to say, We believe this is how things really are. This is the truth. Sometimes when we hear people talking like that, we can feel that those people have a sense of superiority about them, as if they're looking down on anybody who believes differently from them, and judges them with a sense of, I'm right.

You're wrong. I know what's going on. You don't. I'm better than you. Isn't Christianity arrogant and exclusivist? This morning, what I want to put to us is that all people are of equal value and dignity and respect.

All people have freedom of religion, freedom of worship, freedom to believe what they want. And yet not all beliefs or ideas are equally valid, because not all ideas are equally true.

There's four things I want us to think about this morning as we think about this question. I want to think about the nature of truth, the challenge of truth, the promise of truth, and finally, the person of truth.

[ 7 : 26 ] So let's dive straight in. Firstly, the nature of truth. We're looking at this passage that Betty read to us this morning, this encounter in John's gospel in John chapter four.

And in order to understand what's going on here, it helps to understand some of the backstory. Jesus encounters this lady at a watering well in Samaria. Now, this lady that Jesus encounters is a lady who carries a lot of shame in her life.

And we know this for two reasons. The first reason is the scripture tells us she's been married, five times. And the man she's with at the moment is not actually her husband.

And even in our modern day, that would be quite a story. But in ancient Israel, this was nothing less than scandalous. The village in which she lives isn't a big city. It's not a mega city.

These are small villages. Everybody in the town knows that this lady has had five husbands. And everybody in the town knows that she's with somebody at the moment who's not really her husband.

[ 8 : 28 ] This was a cause for great gossip and scandal all throughout the town. But the other reason we know this is because the woman is coming to the well at midday. Nobody in the ancient world went to go collect water, heavy buckets of water in the heat of the day.

In the middle of the day, temperatures could get to 45, 50 degrees Celsius. No one would go to the watering well then. Everyone would go in the earliest part of the day or late in the evening to avoid the heat of the day.

Why does this lady come in the middle of the day? The reason is because she knows that nobody else will be there. She's going there because it's the one time of the day that she can get away from the scowls, the looks, the comments, the mocking thoughts, the jabs of the other woman in the town.

All those who know her story and are judging her. And so she comes to the watering well in the middle of the day hoping to avoid everybody else for just a bit of peace and quiet.

And yet she encounters Jesus. And as she encounters Jesus, Jesus makes this radical claim because Jesus makes the unashamedly strong claim that he's nothing less than the Messiah, God in human form.

[ 9 : 42 ] And yet as we're going to see, this is not bad news. This is good news. Let's look firstly at the nature of truth.

Jesus, in his conversation with this lady, makes some pretty big claims about himself. They're at the watering well and Jesus says to her, everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.

The water that I give will become within him or her a spring of living water welling up to eternal life. What's Jesus saying? Well, he's making a pretty big and binary claim.

He's saying, to find what your heart and your soul is looking for, you have to come to me. But if you reject me, you'll never find what you're looking for in the deepest part of you.

Jesus is not saying that he is a path to meaning and satisfaction in life. All the things that that lady's been looking for and the five men that she's married and the man she's with now, all the affirmation and the acceptance and the approval and the love.

[ 10 : 52 ] Jesus says, I'm not just one path to all of those things. I'm the path. Either you come to me and find what your heart is looking for or you reject me and you never find what you're looking for.

Again, Jesus says to her, he says, look, go and call your husband. And she says, well, I don't have a husband. And Jesus so graciously says, what you've said is true.

You're right in saying I have no husband for you've had five and the man that you're with right now is not your husband. And then Jesus says this amazing thing. He says, what you've said is just, is true.

Now that's an incredible thing to say because let's be honest, what she said was technically true but it wasn't really the whole truth, right? She's being, what some people have called is economical with the truth.

She's saying something that's technically true but it's actually misleading. And rather than Jesus calling her out and saying, you liar, you're deceiving me, Jesus graciously challenges her with what is really true while not judging her or exposing her to more shame.

[ 12 : 00 ] The tenderness of Jesus is just amazing. And yet, Jesus doesn't brush over it. He confronts her with the reality. Why does Jesus do that?

The reason is because Jesus doesn't want this lady or any of us to be confused about the absolute, even binary nature of truth claims. Jesus is unashamedly challenging the post-truth culture by saying that truth is real, it's knowable, it's absolute, and it corresponds to reality.

Jesus claiming that what is true is by nature exclusive because what is is distinct from what isn't. What's true is distinct from what's false.

And friends, I want to put it to us that we all actually know this. We all, in order to function in an ordered and logical world, we all need to believe in the objective reality, the nature of truth.

Imagine, you're about to step out of your apartment and your housemate or your spouse says to you, oh, it's just started raining, you better take an umbrella with you. How many of us would feel that our housemate is being arrogant, exclusivistic, to impose upon us their version of the truth?

[ 13 : 18 ] How many of us would say, that may be true of you, but that's not true for me. Don't impose your worldview upon us. Now, you can say that, but if you don't want to get wet while walking in the rain, you have to conform to the reality that walking in the rain without an umbrella is going to render you wet.

You see, truth is not a social construct. It's not something people came up with to control or manipulate people. Truth corresponds to reality. Here's another example. I know this is a little bit hypothetical, but just bear with me for a second.

Just imagine for a second that the airports are open and that you're actually flying on an airplane to go on holiday. I know that hasn't happened for any of us for a very long time, but just imagine that the airports are open and you're flying somewhere.

How many of us want to fly on an airplane when the co-pilot says to his pilot, look, in order to land safely, you need to drop your speed, tilt the wings, and drop your altitude.

How many of us want a pilot that says, don't impose your truth on me? Don't be so arrogant as to tell me what is your version of truth? That may be true for you, but that's not true for me.

[ 14 : 29 ] None of us want that, right? In order to function in an ordered and a logical world, we all actually believe in the objective nature of truth. We believe that truth corresponds to reality.

A few years ago, the atheist astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson, a very famous astrophysicist in the US, said this. He said, the good thing about science is that it's true whether you believe in it or not.

Well, that's absolutely true, right? Whether you believe in gravitational forces or the earth is round or not, doesn't really matter. Those things are real. That is reality.

But if you think about it, that's not just true for science. That's the good news about all truth. Truth is truth, and it's real whether you believe in it or not. As Os Guinness said, truth is truth even if nobody believes in it and falsehood is false even if everybody believes in it.

And what that means is that truth by nature is exclusive. It makes a claim about the world. It says, this is the way the world is. This is the way the world is not. It separates what's true from what's false, what's real from what isn't, what's dependable from what is faulty.

[ 15 : 47 ] And this is the case for all truth, not just religious truth. Anything that claims to be truth by nature is exclusive. And so when someone says, there's no such thing as absolute truth, all religions are just the same, well that is actually a truth claim.

That's a propositional claim about the way the world is. That's saying that the world is this way, it's not this way. I believe the world is like this. That is a false view of religion and who God is.

Even the belief that there's no such thing as objective, exclusive truth is an objective truth claim about the way that the world is. And so if you think about the story, the parable of the elephant, the only way, the only reason that it seems to make sense is because that story is told from the vantage point, the viewpoint of the narrator.

Somebody who claims to have absolute perfect perspective on the world, somebody who says, let me tell you about how the world is. This is what the world is like. It's like four men that stumble across an elephant.

The only way you can possibly claim that no religion can see the whole truth is if you yourself have superior, comprehensive knowledge about spiritual reality, the very knowledge that you've just claimed nobody really has.

[ 17 : 08 ] You see, all truth claims by nature are exclusive. They make a claim. This is the way the world is. Secondly, the challenge of truth. Now, why do we struggle with this nature of truth?

Why do we struggle with the idea that this is the way the world is? And we push back and we like the idea of living in a post-truth culture. Part of the reason is because the character of truth is that it's confrontational.

It's challenging. It challenges us to say, this is a reality. You need to align your life to reality. In other words, it calls us to surrender and submit to the reality of what the truth is.

There's an old story. It's a bit of a folklore story. But there's an old story of a U.S. battleship sailing somewhere along the coast of Central America. And it's twilight.

It's going into the evening. There's fog all around. The weather's very bad. Nobody can really see much around them. But up ahead, the battleship sees a light flashing in its direction and realizes there's a ship in its way.

[ 18 : 17 ] And so the captain says to his radio man, get on the radio and tell that ship to adjust their course by 20 degrees, otherwise we're going to collide. And so the radio man sends this message across and the message comes back saying, no, we're not adjusting.

You change your course. The captain's a bit irritated. He says, listen, tell them they better change their course quickly, otherwise this is going to end up in a collision.

The message comes back saying, we're not moving. You adjust your course. The captain grabs the radio and he says, listen, this is the captain of the U.S. destroyer.

I command you now to immediately adjust your course. The message comes back saying, this is the keeper of the lighthouse. I suggest you adjust your course.

It's a silly story, but it illustrates the point that reality and truth are confrontational. It challenges us. When we're confronted with the reality of truth, we can't just carry on as if life is arbitrary or has no reality.

[ 19 : 25 ] Truth confronts us and says, what are you going to do with the truth that you've just been told? In this exchange with the woman, after Jesus has revealed her situation with her various romantic partners, the woman replies and says, sir, I perceive that you're a prophet.

And she changes the conversation to spiritual matters, things that she thinks are a little bit more ethereal. And she says to Jesus, look, our people say that you should worship on this mountain.

Your people, the Jews, say that we should worship on this mountain. Who knows really what's right and what's true. I guess they both kind of work. And Jesus replies in effect and says, look, it doesn't matter where you worship or how you worship.

What matters is the condition of your heart. What's Jesus saying? Jesus is saying, look, you can do it here, you can worship there, you worship in your home or a schoolyard or a cathedral.

That's not what's important. What's important is that if you want to know God, if you want to know the truth, you've got to encounter God, you've got to be truthful, not fake.

[ 20 : 31 ] You've got to be surrendered. You've got to come to Him and let Him confront you with the reality of who He is. And then she says something very interesting. She says, well, I guess, who knows how these things work out.

I hear the Messiah's coming. When He comes, He'll tell us reality. And Jesus says to her, lady, the man that speaks to you is He. I am the Messiah.

Jesus is confronting her with the fact that He's not only someone who's bringing the truth, He claims to be the truth. And throughout the Gospels, Jesus is constantly saying these confrontational, these challenging things.

Jesus is constantly challenging the people who are listening to Him to saying, this is a reality. What are you going to do about it? Jesus says things like, whoever holds on to His life will find that He loses it.

But if you're willing to lay down your life for my sake in order to know me, you'll actually find life. Jesus says things like, nobody can come to the Father. Nobody can discover the reality of who God is unless you come to me.

[ 21 : 37 ] At one point, some people are debating, should they follow Jesus or should they stick with the family business? And they're oscillating a little bit between the two. And Jesus says, either you're in or you're out.

You can't be in two camps. Either you believe I am who I say I am or you reject me, but you can't just admire me. You can't sit on the fence. Jesus is constantly making statements.

Things like, I am the door to reality. I am the gate. I am living water. I am truth. And what He's saying is, you can't just admire Him. You can't just tolerate Him.

Jesus doesn't allow us just to consider Himself a good moral man that had some wisdom. He lays down a claim, a binary claim, an exclusive claim. And He says, what are you going to do with it? How are you going to respond to my claim that I am the way to truth?

Os Guinness said it like this. He said, there's two people in the world. Those who conform their lives to the truth or those who try and conform truth to their lives.

[ 22 : 41 ] And again, we actually know that this is self-evident. That when somebody says, this is the way the world is, this is reality, we either conform to it or reject it.

But you can't sit on the fence. Imagine your doctor comes to you and he says, listen, you are in an unhealthy state unless you lose some weight, you start eating healthy and you take this medication, you're going to be dead in six months' time.

Well, we can philosophize all we want about how arrogant that is, how exclusivist that is. But the reality is, if you want to live longer than six months, you have to conform, align your life to the truth of what the doctor said.

You see, friends, in our post-truth culture, we may be tempted to say, well, why can't I pick and choose? I'll take a bit of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount that's about turning the other cheek and forgiving your enemies. I'll take a bit of Eastern meditation.

I'll blend my own fusion of what I believe is to be true. But friends, when we do that, we form a God in our own image. We make a God who looks just like us, a God who never challenges us, but ultimately, we make up a God that doesn't have any connection to reality.

[ 23 : 50 ] The challenge of truth is that it calls us to submit, to surrender. Now, why is this so important? Well, thirdly, because the promise of truth. You see, the stakes couldn't be higher.

Truth promises nothing less than freedom. In the mid-20th century, philosophers like Michel Foucault and others came up with the idea that truth and reality is relative.

It's not really a real thing. Michel Foucault taught that truth and reality is a social construct, something that those in power have created in order to oppress the powerless.

And so, Foucault and others were saying that when somebody, especially those in power, claim that something is right or something is true or use things like divine decree, God has said so, actually, that's a social construct to manipulate or control those that oppose them or their opponents.

The great example of this, of course, is the Crusades in the Middle Ages, right, where the church was saying, we need to impose the reality of Christianity on the rest of the world.

[ 25 : 08 ] And they went in their army and try to oppose and oppress their opponents. Remember the famous saying, religion is the opium of the masses.

It's used to oppress and suppress, manipulate and control people. And of course, one of the great examples of this is Nazi Germany. Hitler claimed that Jews and homosexuals and gypsies were the scourge of Germany.

They were the problem of everything. They were the source of all Germany's problems. And for Germany to really be the nation it was meant to be, we need to get rid of the scourge of Germany. Hitler propagated this truth that these people were stealing the jobs of hard-working German nationals and we need to eradicate such people from our nation so that we can be a pure and a wholesome country again.

Michel Foucault said, people like Hitler, people like the Crusaders, were constructing truth. Truth isn't really real. It was a social construct to impose their will upon others to control and manipulate them.

But is this really true? As we discover, the problem is not actually truth. The problem is the contortion of truth or the manipulation of truth.

[ 26 : 28 ] In fact, the greatest problem is half-truths. Any authoritarian regime or dictator has found that truth is so powerful that if you can take something and dress it up as truth, if you can make something look like truth, it's a powerful weapon that you can use to control others.

But the problem isn't actually the nature of truth itself. It's the contortion and the distortion of truth. One of Hitler's great ministers in parliament was a man by the name of Joseph Goebbels and he was the minister of propaganda.

Joseph Goebbels said this. He said, if you tell a lie big enough and you keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. Now just pause there for a second.

What does that sound like? That sounds like fake news, right? If you can come up with a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. It thus becomes vitally important for the Nazi state to use all of its powers to repress dissent and the truth.

For truth is the mortal enemy of the lie and thus by extension is the greatest enemy of our state. You see what Goebbels is saying? He's saying the problem is we've come up with a version of truth, a half truth.

[ 27 : 49 ] We've come up with a hypothesis and we better not let anybody find out what the truth is. There's a fascinating documentary on Netflix at the moment called The Social Dilemma.

I'm not sure if you've seen it. In this documentary, the creators interview a whole bunch of previous VPs, presidents, top executives of a bunch of social media companies from Silicon Valley.

They're talking about the challenge that the social media age that we live in presents and particularly the challenge of the smartphone and what this is doing for our civilization.

One of the people that they interview is a man by the name of Tristan Harris, a former executive at Google. Listen to what Tristan Harris says. He says, if we don't agree on what is true or that there is such a thing as truth, then we are toast.

This is the problem beneath all other problems because if we can't agree on what is true, we can't navigate out of any of our problems. Do you see what he's saying? He's saying the problem of fake news in our age is rampant and actually what's at stake is nothing less than the freedom of our civilization.

[ 29 : 03 ] The answer is not to suppress truth. The answer is not to deny truth. It's to come to a comprehensive understanding that this is truth and unless we can agree on that, we are toast.

We are finished. Friends, the ramifications of truth are so vitally important because what's at stake is nothing less than freedom, both for individuals and nations and entire civilizations because even though truth demands your submission, your alignment, even though it claims certain things are always true and certain things are always false, when we align ourselves to what's truth, the result is always freedom and liberty.

And it's not only true socially or nationally, it's equally true personally and individually. I'm not sure how many of us have ever been in this situation where maybe you know something or you've been sworn to secrecy something that you cannot tell or maybe you've done something that you're so ashamed of, embarrassed about and you swear that you're going to go to your grave and nobody's going to find out about it.

Friends, how are you ever going to be free from the burden and the weight of such responsibility? The only way is to speak the truth because truth leads to freedom.

That's why anyone who's engaged in Alcoholics Anonymous program or another 12-step program knows that the very first step is to acknowledge reality because the denial of reality never leads to freedom.

[ 30 : 31 ] In order to be free you have to face the reality that is before you. The ancient Hebrews had a proverb that said this, buy the truth and do not sell it.

It's so simple but it's so profound. Whatever it costs you, whatever the cost involved, buy the truth, obtain the truth and no matter what it costs you, never ever sell it.

Never give up on truth because to give up on truth will always cost you more than holding on to truth. Truth is costly, it's true but it's liberating and it's free.

And Jesus in one of his most famous teachings says this, if you listen to my teachings you'll be free. You will discover the truth and the truth will set you free. Earlier this year I was listening to the story of a man by the name of Michael Ramston and he was telling the story of how he became a follower of Jesus.



He said he grew up in a family that wasn't religious at all. He grew up in Lebanon and as a teenager he had big questions about life and faith and meaning and purpose and what is true and in Lebanon he discovers this old missionary and he starts asking this missionary questions, big questions about life and eventually some of his brother and his friends they join this bit of a group and they hang out with this missionary asking him these questions of life and this missionary one day says listen, let's arrange a weekend away and you can ask me all the questions that you want and we can debate and talk about the nature of truth.

[ 32 : 04 ] So they go away for the weekend and on the Friday night Michael Ramston realizes that the claims of Jesus are true but for him that's a problem he didn't want them to be true.

Listen to what he says. He says, I've come to the realization that Christianity was true but I didn't want it to be true because I thought it would make my life miserable.

I was debating how long can I hold off making this decision because I thought that becoming a Christian would be the end of my happiness.

So on the Saturday morning he wakes up early he's wrestling with the decision. He knows it's true but he doesn't want to follow Jesus because he thinks it'll be the end of his happiness. He goes up onto a mountainside and he smokes 40 cigarettes.

Chain smokes two packs of cigarettes wrestling with this decision. He eventually comes down and he gets his brother and his best friends together and he says, guys, I've got some bad news.

[ 33 : 05 ] I've decided tonight's the night I'm going to become a Christian. And this is what he says, tonight I'm going to sacrifice my happiness on the altar of truth. Do you see what he's saying?

He's saying I've discovered the truth and it's demanding that I align my life to it. Even if it costs me my happiness, my freedom, my joy, I've come to the realization I have to sacrifice my happiness on the altar of truth.

Except that's not how it turned out. This is how he finishes the story. When I eventually became a Christian, the thing that totally surprised me was that I didn't sink into some kind of depression as I had expected.

But unexpectedly, I actually discovered this inexplicable joy. I got the opposite of what I thought was coming my way as a result of coming to Jesus.

He thought that he was going to sacrifice his happiness and his freedom and his joy as he aligned himself to truth. But what he found was the opposite. That coming to the truth actually gave him freedom.

[ 34 : 09 ] It gave him joy. It gave him a happiness he never expected and had never anticipated in his life. And that leads us to the fourth point which is the person of truth.

The person of truth is Jesus Christ. You see, we said earlier that every worldview, every claim is binary. It claims that some things are true and some things are not.

Even the objective worldview that says there's no such thing as truth is a truth claim in and of itself. But Christianity is distinctive in this way. Every worldview whether atheistic or theistic every worldview says this is truth.

Here is the truth. Jesus Christ comes along and says I am truth. I am truth. I am the way. I am life. Everything we've spoken about this morning comes to final fulfillment in Jesus.

We spoke about the nature of truth that it's binary. It claims that certain things are true certain things are not. Jesus comes along and he doesn't say I am a version of truth or a part to truth.

[ 35 : 13 ] He says I'm the part to truth. Either you accept me or you reject me but you can't sit on the fence. We spoke about the challenge of truth. It confronts us. It calls us to align ourselves with reality.

Jesus comes and says either you reject me or you accept me but you can't just tolerate me. You can't just admire me. If you're going to follow me your whole life has to come into alignment and you have to surrender and give your whole life to me.

I demand wholehearted devotion. We spoke about the promise of truth liberty and freedom. Jesus comes along and says if anyone listens to my teaching they will know the truth and the truth will set them free because I am truth.

But there's more to Jesus than just his claim to being true. You see just because Jesus claims to be truth and exclusivist how does that stop Christians from being judgmental and arrogant?

Tim Keller helps us here. Listen to what he says. He says you cannot avoid truth claims and binaries. The real issue is which kinds of truth claims lead you to embrace people who are different from you even those who believe differently.

[ 36 : 22 ] Which truth claims lead to community? Which truth claims both humble and affirm you so that you aren't afraid of people who are different from you nor do you despise and judge them.

You see what Tim Keller is saying? He's saying how do we find a truth claim that contrary to contemporary culture it doesn't just say well everything's true. It actually believes this is true.

But how do we find a truth claim? Where do we find a truth claim that contrary to traditional religion isn't judgmental and arrogant towards those that are different from them? That can even be gracious and welcoming and loving towards people who even believe differently?

Where are we going to find such a truth claim? Friends the answer is the gospel. The gospel. I don't know if you picked up in the story in John chapter 4 that Betty read to us earlier.

This lady experiences the truth claim of Jesus and yet doesn't experience judgmentalism. She starts off coming to the well at the middle of day to avoid the other people in the village because she's tired of their judgmental attitudes.

[ 37 : 32 ] And yet at the end of the story after discovering Jesus she puts down her jars of water she runs into the village and she tells everybody come to me listen to me I've just met the man who told me everything about my life.

For her whole life she's tried to hide the story of her life. She's tried to cover up her shame. She's tried to let people not find out what's going on her life because she's tired of the judgmentalism.

She discovers Jesus and she says everybody I've just met a man who knows everything about me and told me my whole life you've got to come and discover him. Why? Because though she discovered the truth of Jesus she didn't encounter his judgmentalism she discovered his grace.

Friends in typical religion says that you're accepted and you're affirmed you're in because of what you do because you've met the grade you've obeyed the teachings you've fulfilled the commandments you've done everything that's required of you you've observed the rules but in the gospel Jesus says you can be accepted you can be affirmed you can be welcomed into his family not because of what you've done but because of what he's done because he died on the cross to take our sin and our judgment and our shame upon himself friends Jesus died on the cross to welcome those in who were once on the outside and that means that there's no room for arrogance there's no room for judgmentalism Christians certainly don't always get this right and if you've ever been judged by Christians I am so sorry but friends the more truly we get the gospel the more we understand the nature of the gospel that the only thing that I contribute to my salvation is my sin and my shame that the reason

I'm included is because of Jesus grace and his mercy and his forgiveness there's no ways I can be arrogant there's no ways I can be judgmental there's no ways I can look at those of other religions and look down my nose at them and think I'm better than you because when I look at the gospel it tells me that I'm a sinner I'm broken that I'm in deep trouble that I need a savior that it's only the mercy and the forgiveness of Jesus that welcomes me in friends the gospel tells me that I'm incredibly loved and accepted by God not because of my pedigree not because of my culture not because of my moral performance but because Jesus went to the cross for me but the second thing is this the gospel tells us that rather than being exclusive Jesus is the most inclusive man that ever lived in the previous chapter to John chapter 4 and John chapter 3 Jesus meets another truth seeker a man by the name of Nicodemus and Nicodemus comes to Jesus by the cover of night in darkness and at the end of that exchange

[ 40 : 25 ] Jesus says one of the most famous words in the entire world he says for God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever would believe in him will not perish but experience eternal life friends look at what it says it says who will get to experience eternal life who is welcomed by Jesus it's whoever whoever whoever will simply come to him friends it doesn't matter what your background is what your culture is what your ethnicity is it doesn't matter what your race is it doesn't matter what family you were born into it doesn't matter the size of your bank account it doesn't matter whether you live up on the peak whether you live in student housing or whether you live under a bridge in downtown Hong Kong friends it doesn't matter whether you have a PhD in astrophysics or whether you dropped out of high school it doesn't matter friends who your family is what your background is it doesn't matter whether you've committed some heinous crime of which you're deeply ashamed or whether you followed all the rules perfectly

Jesus stands with open arms and he says whoever if anyone would come to me irrespective of your age your culture your language your background anyone who will come to me and believe in me anyone who will align their lives to the truth of me is welcome to experience my kingdom my kingdom of life my kingdom of truth my kingdom of joy my kingdom of freedom let's pray together heavenly father thank you so much for the truth of the gospel for many of us we have discovered that the gospel is not just good advice it's good news it's true and because of that we've experienced the freedom and the joy the inexplicable and unexpected happiness and freedom that comes with it Jesus I pray for us as a church watermark I pray for those that are looking in those that are exploring the claims of Christ I pray won't you help us to discover the gospel won't you get the gospel deeper into our hearts won't you undermine any sense of judgmentalism won't you remind us God we've got no reason to look down at others to be arrogant or bigoted because your gospel says that we are saved by grace and grace alone

Jesus thank you so much for your freedom your truth we love you amen