

## Exclusivity



**Exclusive**-and yet, **inclusive** ... that's the topic for this March edition of the View from Here.

This topic came to me after being confronted more than a few times over the years of my ministry by those who question the Christian faith. This topic is associated and concerns a word we don't use very often, if at all, in our everyday conversations. However, it is **implied** in just about everything we say in connection with our faith as Lutheran Christians. The word is **exclusivity**. What a nice, big word, but I know I could count on one hand the number of times I've used it. Even so, there is a problem with "exclusivity".

It's evident that the word is a problem since some individuals are put off by the fact that Christianity stands with Jesus when He says He is **the** Way, **the** Truth, and **the** Life, and no one comes to the Father except through Him. Folks hear that and hear the Church saying, "It's our way or the highway." They say this "exclusivity" makes Christianity standoffish, uppity, and judgmental of other faiths. Many also believe a loving God wouldn't be so exclusive ... and I couldn't agree more!

The truth is, the Triune God is not exclusive at all. Scripture says, "**God would have all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.**" That's in 1 Timothy 2. And in John 3, verse 16, we read: "**God loved the WORLD so much, He gave His only Son in order to save it.**" So, in that sense, there is no exclusivity. No one says faith in the Savior is only for a certain race or gender or economic group. Jesus is for everybody. This is what really strikes at the heart of the matter.

Some would say God is being exclusive when He says people can only be saved through faith in Jesus and not by any other means, but that is, after all, what the Bible says. To be saved, it is necessary to repent to God of our sins against one another and against our loving God, resolving to make the best effort to avoid deliberate repeated sinning. Neither you nor I are in a position to change Scripture, to change that requirement or to make it more palatable to our tastes.

So, then, how do we respond and deal with the charge of exclusivity? I could understand it, and even support one in that position ... as long as they are willing to be **consistent**. But those who don't like exclusivity are miles away from being consistent ... it's like this: Today is February 24, 2016 (or, whatever day you are reading this). Everyone would agree with that fact. But don't you think saying that is exclusive? I mean why can't it be 2003 or 1529 or 3009? Why can't it also be April or July or August? Or all 12 months at once? And why limit ourselves to 12? What if I want there to be the month of Bill or Judy? I can think of any number of reasons why that wouldn't work. It would lead to all sorts of confusion. It would throw everybody's schedule off and people wouldn't know what to do when. So, this kind of exclusivity is necessary and there is no other choice. But the same kind of thing is true in other situations.

When you turn on the news, do you expect them to report the truth or just something more or less close to the truth? When you are sick and go to the doctor, do you expect that physician to examine you and have the knowledge to prescribe the right medicine or would you mind if he said just any old medicine would do? We would all want the right stuff.

God gives us that right stuff in the Person of His Son. Only God's Son could do what Jesus did. Only the Son of God would be willing to offer His life to save us, and not just us, but anyone else who will listen and believe to what the Holy Spirit has to say.

May the joy of Easter permeate your being as we believe what the Holy Spirit has to say through His Word ... We have the promise of life eternal through God's forgiveness in Christ our Lord. How do we know? Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

That's the View from Here!

Pastor Bill Winter

*<sup>31</sup>but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. - Isaiah 40:31*