

I. Intro

A. Dorothy Sayers – a friend of C.S. Lewis, a playwright, poet, essayist and the author of a bestselling mystery series - wrote a series of plays called, *The Man Born to be King*, which was about Christ. And much like Lewis's *Mere Christianity*, it was first released to the public as a series of broadcasts over the BBC in 1941.

B. Sayers work aroused a fair bit of controversy, chiefly because it was “too real.” Feeling that the story of Christ’s life was “muffled by familiarity and a general failure to think of the characters as real people,” she refused to have Jesus speak in King James English and did her best to tell the story as if it really happened.¹ Many were horrified.

C. I’ve been selective in the film clips I’ve played. Today I opted to start after the birth scene – which is mild but I thought might offend some. (If I’m going to offend you I’d rather save it for something other than a film clip.) But I hope you realize that I’ve been playing these clips in an effort to “make it real.” To make the point that Christ was not just a *historic* figure, he was a *historical* one as well. That is, he’s not just an enlightened spokesman for a set of ideas whose message stands whether he existed or not, in many ways He was (and is) the message. If He didn’t exist – if He wasn’t a real person who lived and died in our place – then the whole thing collapses in on itself.

D. Last week I complained that many people now separate faith and reason – unhitch faith from facts, relegate it to feelings and tell us to look inside ourselves for truth. I said, “Don’t go there. Don’t breathe that air or drink that Kool Aide.” Luke is reporting real events that happened to real people. He is writing history. You are no more allowed to dismiss the claims of Christ on the basis of how we feel about them than we are to dismiss any other historical claim, such as the Presidency of Abraham Lincoln.

¹ The Wikipedia entry on *The Man Born to be King* reads: The project aroused a storm of controversy, even before it was broadcast. Objections arose to the very idea — atheists complained of Christian propaganda, while devout Christians declared that the BBC would be committing blasphemy by allowing the Christ to be impersonated by a human actor — and also to Sayers' approach to the material. Sayers, who felt that the inherent drama of the Gospel story had become muffled by familiarity and a general failure to think of its characters as real people, was determined to give the plays dramatic immediacy, featuring realistic, identifiable characters with human emotions and motivations — and speech-patterns. The decision to have the characters speak in contemporary colloquial English was, by itself, the cause of much disquiet among those more used to hearing Jesus and his followers speaking in the polished and formal words of the King James Bible. In the event, although it continued to be criticized by conservative Christians — one group going so far as to proclaim the fall of Singapore in February 1942 to be a sign of God's displeasure with the series. The public reaction to the series is described in the foreword to the published play scripts. *The Man Born to Be King* was generally considered a great success, both as drama and as biblical representation.

E. I'm building on that point today. I want to be sure you understand that the Good News is: news. Good news to be sure. But good news, not good feelings, good insights, good ideas, good wishes, but good news. It's a report of something that actually happened. That's the claim.

F. I also want to be sure you realize that this particular claim demands a response. It calls for a decision. Jesus stands in the center of the road and forces us to turn left or right - to opt in or out, to embrace or deny.

II. Let me walk you through the text verse by verse. Luke 2:8-20.

A. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

1. I'm not sure what images this elicits for you. If it's a plush, peaceful green countryside with brilliant night skies and well fed sheep then you are picturing New Zealand not Israel. When you think Jewish shepherd you need to think of a dreary, low-paying, lonely job with long hours in harsh conditions. (SHOW TWO IMAGES OF SHEPHERD)

2. Some of you men might have played a shepherd in a Christmas pageant growing up. That was a good role. It was better than being a wise man, because all they got to carry were jewelry boxes supposedly full of frankincense, myrrh and gold. And it was way better than being Joseph because he had to walk in with a girl. Shepherds got sticks which you could hit people with during rehearsal.

3. But in real life being a shepherd was (is) a dreary, low-paying, lonely job with long hours in harsh conditions.² You spent all your time with a bunch of dumb and defenseless sheep. Shepherds couldn't make it to the temple for sacrifices or feasts, which further ostracized them. Their status was so low – and they were generally so untrustworthy that they were not allowed to testify in court. It was not a good job. In fact, if you were a first century high school kid and your guidance counselor was encouraging you to think about being a shepherd, well, something had gone wrong.

² There is some debate among scholars as to what point in time it became a particularly bad job – that is, one often associated with crooks and thieves. At the time of Christ it may not have been as lowly as it would later become. But, it was never a good job.

4. But, in what we will recognize as a pattern, God announces the arrival of His Son to shepherds in the fields. Not to Kings and Queens. Not to the rich and powerful, but to the least and the last, to the overlooked and forgotten.³

B. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. Vs. 9: An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

1. Of course they were. As I've said before, the angel didn't look like the angel in the film clip or a Precious Moments figurine. Angels frighten people every time they show up. There is something overwhelming about their size, glory or power that unnerves people.

C. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. Vs. 10: But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David (that is what people called Bethlehem). Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

1. This is the first time in the Bible where all three of these titles are right together. Jesus is the Savior – the rescuer; He is the Messiah – the Promised One, the Christ; and He is Lord – He is the Master. The one we are to follow and obey.

D. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

1. Be sure to hear this. First an angel appeared, then the heavens parted and a great company – a huge heavenly choir – thundered out an announcement.⁴

2. It's hard to imagine how spectacular and overwhelming this would have been.⁵ The movie clip ignores this – probably because it's hard to pull off.

³ There is a possibility that these shepherds were raising sheep that would be sacrificed in the temple. In that sense, they are invited to see the true sacrifice.

⁴ This is the third of the four "songs" found in the opening chapters of Luke. Mary went first, then Zechariah. Simeon's response – which is coming up next week – is the fourth. This is the third.

⁵ Two things merit note: 1) Roman poets and pundits made similar announcements when the emperor had a child who might rule one day; 2) This text does not say that God's favor rests on all. It suggests the opposite. The love of God is extended to all, but his favor seems reserved to those who embrace him.

E. Vs 15: When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

1. That makes sense. When the clouds part and a “great company of angels” tell you that there is something to go see, you go see it.

F. Vs 16: So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger (remember: feed trough). When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child (because, that is what you do with good news, you share it) and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.⁶

G. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

H. On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child,⁷ he was named Jesus,⁸ the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

III. This is a familiar passage. It’s hard to go through December and not hear it read at least once, even if it’s only in a Charlie Brown Christmas special. But I think Sayers was right when she argued that sometimes we become so familiar with a text that we actually stop hearing it.

A. I want to be sure you hear it. What we are being told in verse 13 is that the heavens parted and a thunderous army of angels pointed at Mary’s son and declared: This is the one. He is Savior, Messiah and Lord. Follow Him. Honor Him. Obey Him.

B. From time to time people say to me, “I just wish God would send me a message. Give me a sign. Tell me what I need to know.” Well, he did. He had an announcement made: “Here is my Son. Follow Him.” I know, I know, you weren’t there. Neither was I. But we are not there for most things. We rely on the reports of others. And... AND... that is what Luke is giving us. Remember, his Gospel is a report on his investigation of what actually happened.

⁶ This is the inspiration for the hymn, “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty,” with the line: ponder anew, what the Almighty can do.

⁷ This last verse also suggests that Mary and Joseph kept the Mosaic Law and that Jesus was raised in an observant household.

⁸ You may remember that when Elizabeth tried to name her son John everyone protested because that was not his father’s name. No one protests here. It’s well established that Joseph is not Jesus’s father.

C. I am stressing this to highlight that we are not expected to look inside ourselves for spiritual insight. And because, in spite of the way Jesus is presented – in spite of the claims he makes, the claims developed in the Book – people dismiss the story and rework it in ways they find more convenient. And, hey, you can't do that. The claim here is big. God has shown up to do something and we are invited to respond. He as extended an offer. We do not get to change the offer. It's up or down. That is all quite clear in this book, but it's not well understood by many. So, I want to be as clear as I can about how Christ is talked about in The Book and contrast that with how he and his claims are presented in the culture. And because I want to be as clear as I can be, I'm going to use some simple diagrams.

IV. Diagram one: If we were going to display what Luke has reported so far, diagram today's text using a simple decision matrix, the chart would look like this: SHOW DIAGRAM ONE⁹

A. The claim that Jesus is Savior, Messiah and Lord stands like a fork in the road, requiring us to turn left or turn right, to opt in or out. You will note that we are only given two options. You may not like them. I get that. There are lots of times I don't like my options. But it is important to understand what they are.

B. My job as a pastor includes making the message as clear as I can. I do not get to change the message. There are things I'd like to change. That's not my job. That's not in my power. My assignment is to make the message as clear as I can. And! The message is good. We call it Good News. There is a Savior – a rescuer, someone who will take away our sins and give us eternal life. Don't complain about your options, celebrate the remarkable offer. The message here is clear: Follow. Embrace. This is a no-brainer.

C. Unfortunately, that is not what lots of people do. They not only reject the offer they reject the diagram.

V. Diagram Two: SHOW HERE. Rather than accept an up or down vote on Christ's claims to be Savior, Messiah and Lord, the say I am choosing a third option.

A. Rather than: 1) affirming that Jesus is Savior, Messiah and Lord and accepting him, which is what Luke is advocating, or 2) opting out, saying he is not any of those things, they say he is something else. They say he is: 3) a good man.

⁹ Diagram one: A line leading into a triangle with Jesus written in the triangle, a line emerging from one corner of the triangle pointing to: Jesus is Savior, Messiah and Lord; and a line emerging from the other corner of the triangle saying: Jesus is not.

B. Many people reject the idea that Jesus is who he claimed to be, and say instead that He is a prophet, sage, moral reformer, great teacher, a wise, loving, kind person, a champion for the poor, a brilliant example of how we should live. He's a great person but he is not Savior, Messiah or Lord.

C. This is a common view today. And this has been a popular response almost from the beginning. In fact, so many people want to reframe the offer that we really need to reframe the diagram. There really aren't three options, there are many. SHOW DIAGRAM 2A¹⁰. Some suggest that Jesus is "almost God," some say he is the best person ever, or a prophet. And others say he didn't even exist.

D. The advocacy of these additional paths led the early church to tighten their argument. We get a couple notable responses.

1. One was the Latin Phrase: *aut deus aut homo malus*. Which means, Jesus is God or a Bad Man.¹¹ SHOW DIAGRAM ONE A.

a) As a side bar let me note that we've not been given enough information yet – not by Luke 2 – to understand that Jesus is fully God. But that is coming. We will see that in a whole host of ways this is the claim. He accepts worship, forgives sins, says He is the creator of all things and that in the end he will act as judge over everyone. He claims to be one with the Father. The religious leaders want Him killed because He claims to be God. In light of all of this, the early church will frame their argument this way: *aut deus* (either he is God) or *aut homo malus* (he's a bad man.)

b) He claims to be God. So, either he is or he is not. If he is not, he either knows he is not but lies about it, or he is profoundly mentally ill. God or a bad man.

¹⁰ This diagram looks like Diagram 2, but there are lots of additional arrows. Between Jesus is God and Jesus is a good man are other options: Jesus is the best man ever, Jesus is a prophet, Jesus is god-like. And between Jesus is a good man and Jesus is only a man are other options: Jesus was a bad man; Jesus was

¹¹ Which C.S. Lewis expanded with: Jesus is Lord, Liar or Lunatic. He is God or he's not. And if he is not he either knows he is not and is lying or he thinks he's god when he's not, he's profoundly crazy.

2. A second thing we see them do is craft a Creed that took away the “Jesus is a really, really good man, god-like in most every way but not quite equal to the God the Father.” This is all spelled out in the Nicene Creed,¹² which was written to address the claims of a popular late 3rd / early 4th century preacher named Arius who was misleading many with a third option. The arguments are a bit technical, but let’s say: he said Jesus was 99 percent God but not 100 percent – not equal, not of the same essence or nature as the Father. In response the leaders of the early church wrote a creed that clarifies what the Bible teaches. And it states that Jesus is: Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father.

E. In other words, they said – there is no third option. Jesus is God or a Bad Man. But that hardly stopped people from changing the offer and then saying, “I choose my option.” Hey, when I was in High School I had a friend who occasionally went straight even when the road went right or left. It wasn’t pretty. But he did it. And people still do it today. In spite of the claims of Christ, in spite of the story, in spite of logic, in spite of the creeds, it spite of it all, when you say, “Door number one or door number two?” They say, “Door number three.”

VI. And, recently, something new has been added. A new diagram has been drawn – DIAGRAM THREE¹³ - which dismisses the force of Christ’s claims to be God by suggesting that all religions are essentially the same. All roads lead to the same destination. We might be taking different routes up to the mountain, but we will all meet at the top.

A. I wish this was right. I’d choose this plan. I’m familiar with it. I’ve talked with people who embrace it and read their books. There is something very open minded and attractive about it. I’d love to be able to say, “All religions are essentially the same – they’re all based on the same ideas and ideals. We might be calling God by different names but we are all praying to the same entity.” The problem is this view doesn’t withstand any scrutiny at all.

B. For starters, this is certainly not what the Bible teaches.

1. The Bible is quite clear that there is one God and one way back to him. Or, to state this differently: different paths lead to different destination.

¹² One of the most charismatic advocates of the straight ahead view was a man named Arius, who lived in the 3rd century. He was willing to say that Jesus was god-like, the best person to ever live, even more than a person, but not fully God. His views caused all kinds of problems and forced Constantine – who was trying to unite Europe and needed the church’s help – to gather all of the bishops together in Nicaea, his temporary capitol, and talk about this. They did and gave us the Nicene Creed.

¹³ Diagram Three shows a cone with arrows all pointing to the top.

2. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus argues that there is a popular trail that leads away from God and a road less traveled that leads towards him.¹⁴
3. In other parts of the Bible, Christ develops the narrow trail / one right way idea at even greater length, making very bold and very exclusive statements about Himself.¹⁵
4. We are always free to say that: the Bible is wrong, that Jesus has it wrong, that He is not who He claims to be. We can claim that there is more than one way up the mountain. But we cannot claim that the Bible leaves this possibility in play.

C. Secondly: Virtually every other worldview – every other truth claim, every other religion and philosophy – makes a similar claim for itself. That is, they do not claim that they are one path among many, or even simply the best path, but that they are the only real path.

1. Islam does not claim that Christianity is a viable option. Buddhism does not suggest that Hinduism also works. What they claim is that, while there are aspects of truth in other worldviews – even some things worth celebrating – they are not ultimately true.^{16 17}

¹⁴ He further suggests that many people will be led astray by false prophets.

¹⁵ These are shocking, in part because of the simple way he lived, the fact that he “did not come to be served but to serve,” and his teaching that the first will be last, but there can be little doubt that he makes these claims. Jesus not only teaches that He was present at creation, able to forgive sins and that He would serve as the ultimate judge of all of humanity, He points a fine point on it. In John 14:6 he claims to be the way, the truth and the life and that no one gets to the Father except through him. There is not a lot of wiggle room in that statement. And it’s not just Jesus. His claims of “one way” are consistent with what we find in the rest of the Bible. The Old Testament repeatedly warns against idolatry – that is, worshipping anyone or anything other than the one true God. The 10 Commandments open with a prohibition against worshipping any other gods – small “g”. This is not because God is jealous in the way you might think. He is not. He is totally complete. Lacking in nothing, therefore we cannot add to him in any way. Instead we are told not to worship other gods because they are not real. They are given specific instruction to avoid the views of those around them, which were mostly syncretistic – that is, the idea that all religions are basically the same or at least compatible.

¹⁶ There are certain truths that are advanced in healthy cultures / worldviews – e.g., kids need to be cared for, it’s best to honor your parents, debt is a bad idea – but perhaps fewer than you think. For starters, cultures often decay, “progressing” beyond their traditional values. And, some of what you assume is advanced by other religions (love your enemies, care for the poor) is not universally embraced. Muslims are instructed to kill the infidels and Hindus believe that helping the poor is wrongheaded because that is their karma. (Much of the aid provided to the poor in India is provided by Christian groups not Hindu ones).

¹⁷ 1) There are those who claim that everything works, but what they basically say is: their view works. They strip the other religions down to a shell the other religions refuse to accept. For example: The Baha’i argue that all roads lead down the same path. Their web site says: “In reality there is only one religion, the religion of God. This one religion is continually evolving, and each particular religious system represents a stage in the evolution of the whole.” This sounds very enlightened but when you talk with them – as I did a few years ago at their temple – you quickly realize that they do not really recognize other faiths, only their caricature of the other faiths. 2) Some branches of Hinduism make similar sounding claims, arguing that God approaches men in whatever manner they

D. And this is because – point 3 – they teach such radically different things. The differences b/w the creeds of the major religions are substantial.¹⁸

1. This is not to say that there is not any overlap. There is. Confucius says, “Don’t do to others what you do not want them to do to you.” Jesus says: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. These are different, but there is a lot of overlap. We could come up with lots of examples.

2. But we need to be honest. At the deepest level there are irreconcilable differences. Buddhists deny that there is a god.¹⁹ Hindus claim there are millions. They can’t both be right. Buddhists and Hindus both believe that the way forward is by losing yourself – losing your individuality and all desire by melding into a single cosmic consciousness. And that this happens through a cycle of reincarnations, during which we work off our bad karma.²⁰ Christianity says we live once, die, face judgment and head to an eternity in which we always remain uniquely who we are. Furthermore, we are not redeemed through our efforts to work off our bad karma but through Christ’s death in our place. Both views cannot be right.²¹

approach him. “In whatever way men approach Me, even so do I approach them.” (Quoted from the Hindu Scripture by Swami Chidananda of Divine Life Society.); 3) Kipling uttered essentially the same idea when he wrote, “Many roads thou hasn’t fashioned; all of them lead to the light.” 4) There are people within every major religion (including Christianity) who – against their own creeds – say that all religions work; 5) And finally there are many today who embrace the postmodern potpourri – contending that we are free to pick and choose as we see fit. Truth is relative. We’re free to make it up as we go.

¹⁸ I stress this point in part because, beginning in the 19th century – when Comparative Religion became an academic discipline – much time and energy have been spent trying to show that the major worldviews were (are) essentially the same. That is, the “essence” of every religion is the same as the “essence” of every other religion. If you read any comparative religion you will almost certainly see people advocating for: 1) the universal fatherhood of God & brotherhood of man; 2) the “all roads lead up the same mountain” analogy.

¹⁹ Some aspects of Buddhism recognize a god. This god is not personal, but it’s not entirely true to say that all Buddhism is atheistic at its core.

²⁰ The idea that “ultimate reality is a oneness beyond differentiation” is called Monism. Buddhism – which has different branches, some are polytheistic, some are pantheistic but most are atheistic - is impersonal and Monistic. Hinduism is polytheistic and Monistic.

²¹ The Koran claims that Jesus is a prophet but not God. The New Testament says he is a prophet and God. Both cannot be right. In an essay entitled, “Is One Religion As Good As Another?” J.I. Packer writes, “The more one thinks about the question, the odder it seems. ‘God for what?’ The great religions do not even claim to be good for the same thing.”

J.I. Packer, “Isn’t One Religion As Good As Another?,” *Hard Questions*, edited by Frank Colquhoun, IVP, 1976, p. 15.

3. It is possible that they might all be wrong, but they cannot all be right.²²

E. If I was going to diagram all of the options out there – atheism, agnosticism and all forms of theism: i.e., deism, polytheism, monism, monotheism. If I laid every worldview – every philosophy and religion – in front of you, it would look something like this: DIAGRAM FOUR.²³

F. The crazy thing is, right now, some people are saying that all of those arrows are heading in the same direction. And I want to say, “no they are not.” And, the view that says they are, is its own arrow. It’s called Pluralism. This is the view that is encouraging us to tie faith to feelings not facts. And, most in this camp end up – consciously or not – arguing that, when it comes to faith, sincerity is about all that matters. Whatever gets you through the night. Whatever works for you, as long as you do not suggest it’s true or try to share it with anyone else. Luke would shake his head at all of this and say, “I’m reporting what happened. If it didn’t happen it doesn’t matter. If it did, it changes everything. Why in the world would you think that you can make something up and call it true?”

VII. Now, I’m about to land the plane. Please stay with me.

A. I know that I’ve asked you to think harder than you planned to this morning. (I’m not sure if I should apologize for that or not.)

B. And I know that more than a few of you are thinking, “Come on Woodruff. I need something practical.” I’d actually argue that this is the most practical stuff in the world. We are talking about our default setting. How we see unconsciously see and understand everything. How we make sense of who we are and what is real.

²² “Help the religious pluralist see that he does not really believe that all roads lead to heaven. If he did, then he would not express outrage at suicide bombings, human sacrifice, and other such practices that even staunch religious pluralists find abhorrent. One cannot consistently embrace religious pluralism and relativism and at the same time object to any religious belief or practice. If sincerity is all that matters for salvation, religious terrorists who sincerely believe their god calls them to kill others do nothing wrong when they obey him. To condemn even one religious belief is to appeal to some ultimate, normative standard by which we may evaluate religion, establishing that standard as the one, true religion – and there can be no one, true religion for the honest religious pluralist.” Robert Rothwell, “A Brave New World,” *Tabletalk*, June 2008, p. 13,

²³ Arrows head out in every direction.

C. I hope you see that, or that you will after you get done talking this through in your small groups. I've expanded on all of this a bit in the notes that are on line. From time to time I come back to this because it is so hard to see. But we need to see it. We breathe in different air today than we did 20 years ago. We are living in a moment when the fundamental assumptions of Western society – that mix of Greek, Roman, Jewish and Christian thought that gave us the West – are being set aside. People are feeling today a lot more than they are thinking. That doesn't work. We need both.

VIII. Let me end with five short admonitions.

A. First, we need to love people. We need to be patient and loving at all times. Beliefs about ultimate matters often foster deep and passionately held positions that can spill over in ugly ways. We cannot let that happen. The goal behind the "all roads lead up the same mountain" argument is well intentioned. The goal is peace. Religion has led to violence in the past and in the present. Christ followers need to advocate for Christ with truth and love, never hate or anger. We are called to Proclaim the Good News and Engage in Good Works – to love and serve others. If our theology is better than our love should be stronger.

B. Second, we need to appreciate and protect the genius of religious freedom. It is a very good thing that in this country everyone is allowed to believe whatever they want to believe. We should be thankful for that. And as Christians, it's all we ask for. We do not need the government to advocate for us. All we need is a chance.

C. Third, we need to help people see that there is a difference between issues of political freedom and issues of intellectual viability. Defending religious freedom is not the same thing as saying all religions are right or are equally true. Saying "you have a right to believe something" is not the same thing as saying, "what you believe is right." We need to help people see that people have equal worth but ideas do not.²⁴ Some ideas are better than others.

²⁴ In arguing that there is one way that is true, I am not suggesting that we should be intolerant of other views, either personally or nationally. One of the great things about America is that we provide legal toleration for different religious beliefs. (There is no national, state-sponsored faith or church such as they have in much of Europe.) This is a good thing. We should protect the religious freedoms of others and be charitable with those with whom we disagree, because: 1) The Christian faith cannot be forced on anyone; 2) All we need is a free marketplace of ideas to do our work. But, it is one thing to be charitable and it is quite another to suggest that other views are true. It is one thing to make sure people can follow the dictates of their conscience without fear of persecution – i.e. that religions enjoy equal protection under the law – and quite another to suggest that all religions are equal or equally valid. People have equal value but ideas do not. Nor do cultures.

D. Fourth, we need to fight the idea that in matters of faith, sincerity is a test for truth. This is where you end up when you separate faith and reason – when you say, faith is internal whereas reason is tied to facts – and it doesn't work. Sincerity is a measure of belief not truth. You can believe with all of your heart that $2 + 2 = 4$. Your sincere belief does not change the fact that $2 + 2 = 5$. Likewise, you can say that different roads all lead to the same place but they do not. And it's not helpful to tell people that they do. If a young couple pulls up alongside you – and you look in the car and realize that she is in labor and he is panicked and he asks, "Which way to the hospital?" It's not helpful to say that all roads will get you there. Just drive. If there really is only one way to the hospital, then those who suggest that any road will get you there are not being open-minded and helpful. They are being dangerous. They are the ones hurting others.²⁵

1. The goal of pluralism – which is the air we are breathing – is peace. But the price is truth.²⁶ Different world views: 1) Do not share the same starting assumptions; 2) Do not have the same goals; 3) Do not agree on the nature of God or the way man's problems can be fixed.

E. Finally, we need to place our bets. We need to land. Luke reports that the heavens parted and the angels announced that Jesus was God. Either this happened or it didn't. Either Jesus is God or He isn't. At one level, the options before you are really that simple. If you think he is, follow. You have to choose. I would point you to the Good News. Luke 2:10-11. The angel announces: "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Jesus is the savior, the Christ, the Anointed One, the chosen one, the special one. He is Lord. He is over all religions. He's over all nations. He is over all peoples. You can choose Christ. Or not. Everybody chooses something. Don't chose the option that no one thinks will work.

²⁵ But, that is not the way most people see it today. And so, we need to be prepared to be ridiculed for our position. In the recent past the idea of truth has been lost and tolerance has been redefined from "peacefully co-existing alongside people you disagree with" to "affirming the beliefs of others." We are expected to affirm almost any sincerely held view – so, the idea that Jesus is the way and the truth and the life and that no one gets to the Father except through him is not going to play well. We will increasingly be viewed as small minded and mean. This is not, by the way, a new problem. The Jews faced it. People got quite mad at them for not being willing to share their God with others when the others were willing to share their gods with the Jews. It's much easier to be liked if you are willing to affirm everyone.

²⁶ And we've seen this before. In their desperate effort to avoid conflict the false prophets of Israel cried, 'peace, peace.' But there was no peace."