

Come As You Are (CAYA) Service  
Wednesday, December 7, 2011  
Rev. Howard-John Wesley  
Alfred Street Baptist Church

## Being Christian: In Our Multi-Faith Society

### Call to Worship Scripture Reference - **Acts 4:5-12 (ESV)**

[5] On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem,  
[6] with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family.  
[7] And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?"  
[8] Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders,  
[9] if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed,  
[10] let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well.  
[11] This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.  
[12] And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

### Lesson Scripture Reference - **John 3:12-18 (ESV)**

[12] If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?  
[13] No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.  
[14] And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,  
[15] that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.  
[For God So Loved the World]  
[16] "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.  
[17] For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.  
[18] Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

The Lord will never fill you beyond you confessed level of need

- God does not pour into a cup that isn't open for Him to fill
- If you haven't gotten to the point where you feel you need God, God has a way of putting us into situations to remind us that we can't make it without Him

Quote from Hans Kung suggested that the world is imploding on itself and the next world conflicts would be not ideological, but theological.

- Cultures and ideas and people would be in constant contact with those things that were foreign to us 40 years ago, on a regular basis.
- WWW (World Wide Web) - keeps us connected to those all over the world
- Next level of fighting would be religious

Religion has a way of causing conflict among us when we are around those who think/believe different than we do.

- ✓ <slide> The boundaries and borders of American society and culture have become fluid
- ✓ Who we used to be, as Americans, has changed
  - ✓ Years ago, we could look at someone and pretty much surmise what they were here in the US - religion, culture, nationality, sexual orientation, etc.
- ✓ <slide> Christianity is no longer the singularly dominant religious expression in America
- ✓ <slide> U.S. Religious Landscape Survey from 2007

<slide> On any given day you cross paths with more people who are not Christian than those who are - people who have contemplated and rejected the claims of Christianity.

- ✓ On our job, in your friend circle, we will continuously come across those who are not Christian.
- ✓

Question: What are we called to do and how are we called to live?

<slides> Multi-faith Society

- ✓ We ALL must go through diversity training on our jobs
- ✓ Anything that is not accepted, overall, is perceived as bigoted
  - ✓ We've got to be tolerant of someone else's religion, but we can't put up a cross on our desk because it may be offensive
- ✓ We all know some good people who are not Christians!
  - ✓ We all know some people who are fundamentally good people in the world that aren't Christian.
    - ✓ Because these people aren't satanic, mean, etc., we become more tolerant
    - ✓ Be clear! Those who claim Christianity does not equate to being nice :)

Question: How do we as Christians deal with the fact Ma Hat Magandi was not Christian?

- ✓ One of the biggest advocates of peace and equality
- ✓ Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King spoke frequently of his teachings
- ✓ Hitler was a professed Christian
- ✓ Question: Are we comfortable with saying that Hitler went to heaven but Magandi went to hell?

- ✓ There are attractive and positive truths in other religions
  - ✓ Another quote from Hans Kung <slide>

✓ Non-Christian religions also practice peaceful and positive rituals, meditations and disciplines

- ✓ Their adherence as believers to their "religion" makes them attractive; they are committed to a disciplined life that a lot of Christians aren't
  - ✓ MOST Islamics will not go out and get drunk
- ✓ There is something attractive about a disciplined brother or sister and won't allow the things of the world distract their beliefs
- ✓ If we have a problem with an area of our life, some of those other beliefs will seem attractive to us due to their "discipline". We are missing that as Christians.
- ✓

<slides> Christianity's Bad Rap

- ✓ Disunity of Definition
  - ✓ What exactly does it mean to be Christian?
  - ✓ Ask 5 Christians and you'll get 6 different answers
  - ✓ The world on the outside looks at us and thinks that WE are confused
- ✓ Separation of Saints
  - ✓ We tear each other down too much
  - ✓ We are GREAT at being judgmental but horrible at supporting each other
- ✓ Carnal Christians
  - ✓ We are the worst marketers of Christianity by our lifestyle
  - ✓ Ma Hat Magandi was once asked what was limiting the growth of Christianity in India? His answer - Christians.
- ✓ Malicious Message
  - ✓ We'll stand for what we DON'T believe vs. what we do believe
- ✓ Horrible History
  - ✓ Some of the greatest evils in humanity were done by those who said that they were Christians

Question: What do we believe about other faith tradition?

- ✓ Orthodoxy shapes orthopraxis
  - ✓ If you believe right, you'll act right

### <slide> Three Traditional Christian Views of Other Religions

#### 1. Exclusivists

- ☉ Believe that there is no salvation outside of Jesus Christ
- ☉ John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Phillipans 2:10
- ☉ A hard-core exclusivist, although Biblical, view will doom the majority of humanity to hell

#### 2. Inclusivists

- ☉ Believe that the *possibility* of salvation exists outside of Jesus Christ
  - ☉ What do you do about the Jews (God's first chosen people)?
- ☉ John 10:16
- ☉ Anonymous Christians
  - ☉ There are those who are saved that just don't know that they are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ
- ☉ Universalists
  - ☉ All people are ultimately going to heaven
  - ☉ The death of Jesus Christ was so powerful and God is so loving, that you are still covered, whether you believe in Him nor not
  - ☉ NPR's *This American Life*
    - ☉ Google Carlton Pearson

#### 3. Pluralists

- ☉ Believe that there is salvation outside of Jesus Christ
- ☉ "One God with many names"
  - ☉ John Hick (author)
    - ☉ argues that Christianity needs a Copernicus revolution
- ☉ Blind men with elephant metaphor
  - ☉ Are all religions fundamentally the same - blind humanity reaching out for an elephant?
- ☉ This stance, although seemingly right, wipes away the uniqueness of Christianity

### The Uniqueness of Christianity

## 1. Incarnation

- 🎧 The doctrine and belief that Jesus Christ is God
- 🎧 Christianity, in a technical sense, is not a religion
  - 🎧 Religion - to perform certain things
  - 🎧 There are no specific acts that we do define us as Christians
  - 🎧 We've confessed with our mouths
  - 🎧 It's a relationship with God through Jesus that is not predicated on a certain act that we do
- 🎧 We come to church to grow, but not prove we are Christian
- 🎧 Christianity is not a blind attempt to reach out to God and grab a hold to whatever piece we get
  - 🎧 It's God opening our eyes to see Him!
  - 🎧 Everything else is an attempt to reach a piece of God
  - 🎧 Hebrews 11:1
  - 🎧 Jesus is saying to us that He is no longer a mystery; open your eyes to me.
    - 🎧 That puts us in an either/or position: either He is God or He's lying

## 2. Crucifixion

- 🎧 When Christ died, He died **FOR** us
  - 🎧 He died in our place, so that we may have life eternally and He died on our behalf so that we may have life here and now
  - 🎧 No other religious leader died **FOR** you

## 3. Resurrection

- 🎧 He rose! No one else rose from the dead.
- 🎧 Three indisputable proofs that Jesus rose from the dead
  1. Because He said He would
    1. My Jesus doesn't lie
    2. Everything He said, He did
  2. Because lies don't last
    1. The best lie you ever told in life came out!
    2. Don't you know that with EVERYTHING the devil has done, he would have produced the body of Jesus Christ by now?!
  3. Because of the transformed lives of we who believe in Him
    1. Acts - the lame man who is brought to his feet to walk

Question: Regardless of our perception of other religions, how are we called to live as Christians in this multi-faith world?

## Five Things, As a Child of Christ, We Need to Live in this Multi-Faith World

### 1. Know the Basics of Christian Doctrine

1. I Peter 3:15, Hosea 4:6
2. We are the laziest faith folk in the world
  1. we don't study our own faith
  2. part of this comes from lazy pastoring
  3. if you aren't learning anything from church but get a good shout in?
3. Book recommendations (time to start studying and understanding what we believe)
  1. What Every Christian Ought To Know by Adrian Rogers (entry-level)
  2. Introducing Christian Doctrine by Millard Erickson (deeper study)
  3. Lee Strobel (author) - excellent books

2. Practice and Profess the Disciplines of Christianity (e.g. prayer, fasting, worship, confession, Eucharist, tithing, love ethic)
  1. People around you ought to know that you can't be bothered around certain times, etc., because of what you practice as a Christian
    1. We ought to be vocal about the fact that we do them because of our adherence to our beliefs
    2. Praying and fasting - we ought not be ashamed
      1. Get to Ramadaan - Muslims will gladly tell you that they are fasting
    3. Worship - critical to us
      1. People don't present options to us because we are going to worship
      2. Not done out of "convenience" but because we are supposed to
    4. Confession of Sins
      1. we are going to sin
      2. there is something powerful about confessing our sins where God can strengthen us from it
    5. Eucharist (Holy Communion)
      1. Not some empty ritual - something we should take seriously
    6. Tithing
      1. We need to put God FIRST in our finances
    7. Love ethic
      1. We love people, regardless of their situation (not judgement or condemnation)
      2. Anything done, in the name of Christ, without love, ain't Christian
3. Sow the seeds of salvation through testimony and dialogue not debate (Titus 3:9)
  1. We don't save ANYONE! God uses us to plant seeds in people that the Holy Spirit utilizes at His given time.
  2. Get out of religious debates with people.
    1. Some of us are more easily argued out of our faith stance than our sports teams.
  3. What wins people is not our doctrine but our testimony
    1. that can't be argued!
  4. There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. There will be no peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions.
4. Do not make judgements about salvation (Matthew 7:1, I Corinthians 4:5, Genesis 18:25)
  1. You don't know WHO is saved! Worry about your own salvation.
  2. One of the worst things we do is swear who is going to hell. There are going to be some folk in heaven that are going to mess us up! We are going to be like, "Daaaaang?!"
  3. Only the judge of the earth will determine who enters Heaven and Hell. Let God work that out.
5. Become unashamedly and unapologetically Christian
  1. Let the world know that you stand on what you believe.
  2. We have to come out of the closet with our faith.
    1. How many people do you interact with on a daily basis that know we are Christian?

Announcements

*CAYA New Years Eve Event* - please make sure you are on the CAYA, ASBC Singles and/or ASBC YAM listserv(s). There will be random raffles over the next two months for those who purchase tickets online. More information coming soon, via the listserv(s) above.