

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

We all like to have access. Maybe it's access to products you'd like to buy at the store, but can't find elsewhere. Maybe it's access to the internet. Maybe it's access to places you want to go, things you'd like to do, or people you'd like to see, but you can't always get access, can you?

Your store runs out of that certain product. There are still places without internet access, and sometimes roads are closed or flights too expensive. When it comes to people, there are many to whom we don't have access—famous celebrities and athletes, CEOs of major corporations, and world leaders like the President of the United States. So how do you get access to the famous or the powerful? Often it takes something like a press pass or a backstage pass to get you where the average person usually cannot go. Sometimes it's a matter of knowing the right person with the right credentials who can perhaps get you exclusive access, but for most of us that kind of access is pretty rare and unlikely.

What about access to the holy God—the Lord of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things, the Judge of the living and the dead? You'd think that access to the holy God would be easy and open. In fact, most everyone thinks they have access to God to tell him what they think, to offer up prayers about everything, or to make demands of him. You ask most people how they have access to the holy God and they'll probably tell you, "Well, if I'm good...if I work hard...if I'm faithful...if I'm moral not like so-and-so over there...if I do my best and don't mess up in a big way, then God has to give me access. If nothing else, I can always bargain with him."

Sounds like something that comes naturally to almost every one of us. "If I just work hard enough, if I'm just faithful enough, then God has to give me access to him." At first, it sounds pretty good, but what does Jesus have to say about that access to the holy God? ***"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."***

"No one comes to the Father except through me"? That's a pretty exclusive claim! According to Jesus, there's only one way to have access to the holy God—through him alone. Naturally, a claim like that leads to all kinds of objections. "You mean there's no other way, except through Jesus?" "You mean I'm wrong and that I can't get myself into heaven?" "You actually dare to say that apart from you I'm headed for hell and the same goes for my loved ones?" "How judgmental! How exclusive! How intolerant! How could you possibly make such an absolute claim?" All those objections quickly turn into rejection, because Jesus' claim of being the only access to the holy God flies in the face of hearts and minds firmly convinced that it doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you believe it.

Even for people like you and me who have come to know Jesus, there's something of a sting in his words. Your sinful nature doesn't want to hear that Jesus is the only access to the Father, especially if you harbor in your heart the thinking that God has to pay attention to how you serve him. Your sinful nature makes you cringe when you hear those words and have to admit to your unbelieving friends that you actually trust in someone who made such an absolute claim over 2,000 years ago. You cringe because you know that they'll always see the negative side to that claim. Those friends, loved ones, co-workers, classmates have no access to their heavenly Father apart from Jesus and are therefore headed for hell.

Who wants to hear that? Jesus' statement is exclusive. It is "intolerant". It is absolute. It is "judgmental" for our day and age, because it's true. Yet there's so much more to his claim than condemnation. ***"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."***

Yes, Jesus' statement is exclusive to those without access, but it also means he gives us exclusive access to our heavenly Father. As true God and as a true human, Jesus is the right person with the right credentials to give us exclusive access to the Father that we can't find anywhere else.

Jesus gives us access to the Father. His own disciples had a hard time understanding that. In fact, Philip, one of Jesus' most practical-thinking disciples, even called Jesus out on this claim. He heard Jesus' words of exclusive access and didn't really seem to understand what Jesus was telling them. Philip wanted to see the glory. He wanted to see the Father. ***"Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."*** You can sympathize with Philip. He'd been around Jesus for 3 years. He knew Jesus was the Messiah, but he wanted to see the holy God who was in charge of everything. "Just a little glory, Lord..."

You can see Jesus shake his head. **“Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?”** Jesus wanted Philip and the other disciples to realize that they didn’t have to go looking anywhere else for access to the Father. They had Jesus and that’s all they needed. For you and me, that’s all we need too.

...But how do I know that Jesus gives me access to the Father? How do you know? Jesus provides two ways that we can be sure that we have access through him. The first is through his words. **“The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me...”** Why does it matter what Jesus taught and preached? He was like no other teacher or preacher. We’re told repeatedly throughout the Gospels that he spoke with an authority that no one else had.

Why did he speak like that? He spoke as the true God. His words were not exclusively his, but the words of the triune God. With words, he cut and killed human hearts with the harsh preaching of God’s judgment, but with words, he also healed and raised to life with the sweet good news of sins forgiven, of exclusive access to the Father, of life eternal. With those words, Jesus proclaimed a message like no other—the unconditional love of God for sinners who deserve it not. Then Jesus put that love into action.

“...It is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.” It wasn’t just Jesus’ words, but his works that demonstrated time and again that he was true God and the only way to the Father. Just look at what he did! You see it in his perfect life, submitting to his own holy Law without sin. You see it throughout the three years of his public ministry in the miracles he performed. Jesus healed the sick. He caused the paralyzed to walk. He gave sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf. He cast out demons and raised the dead. With every miracle, Jesus demonstrated his own divine authority and no one else’s.

As amazing as those miracles were, however, they were just a preview of the great things he was going to do starting that very night. You see, Jesus spoke these words of comfort and confidence to his disciples in an upper room on the night he was betrayed. Just hours after speaking these words, Jesus would be betrayed, arrested, beaten, mocked, spit on, and condemned. He would be flogged and rejected and condemned again by those who would have him nailed to the beams of a wooden cross and put on shameful display for all to see. He would suffer the punishment of hell for the sins of all, even those who reject him for being so exclusive, though he deserved none of it. Then he would suffer death.

Yet three days later, his tomb would be left empty, because unlike any other, Jesus would conquer sin and Satan and death forever. He would guarantee that the promises he made to his followers and to us would be fulfilled, even the promise of eternal life in his Father’s heavenly home. **“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many homes; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”** That’s an exclusive promise from our exclusive Savior.

A promise like that reminds you and me why it matters that you have exclusive access to the Father through Jesus. Jesus is **“the way”**. There is no other route. There is no back door. Jesus is the only way for any of us to enjoy the heavenly comfort and joy that await us with the Father in heaven.

Jesus is **“the truth”**. In our day and age, your truth is your truth and my truth is my truth, but none of it is **“the truth”**. None of it can withstand the trials and difficulties and challenges and temptations and hardships and sorrows and grief of this life, but Jesus can and has and does. He picks you up when you’ve been crushed. He takes your burden when you’ve been overwhelmed. He calms your troubled heart with peace. He dries your tears with the comfort of the resurrection and removes your guilt with grace. He stays by your side every step of the way until he brings you home—and that’s a guarantee you won’t find anywhere or in anyone else.

Jesus is **“the life”**. On your own, you’re dead. I’m dead. This life simply passes away, but in Jesus, you have life with him and eternal life with your heavenly Father. No one and nothing else can guarantee that or give you that. Besides Jesus, there is no other way, no other truth, and no other life. There is comfort, however, when Jesus states clearly and exclusively, **“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** Through Christ, you have exclusive access to the holy God, your heavenly Father who loves you and saves you through his Son. Trust in the reality of your exclusive Savior and look forward with hope to what he has in store for you exclusively in his Father’s heavenly home. Amen.