

THE HOLY TRINITY

June 11, 2017

Isaiah 43:11: **“There Is No Other God!”**

Pilgrim Lutheran Church
2155 North Oakland Avenue
Decatur, Illinois 62526

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In 2008, the well-known talk show host, actress, producer, and philanthropist, Oprah Winfrey said: “One of the mistakes that human beings make is believing that there is only one way to live and that we don’t accept that there are diverse ways of being in the world, that there are millions of ways to please God and many ways, many paths to what you call God.” In 2012, she further said this:

I believe that Jesus came to show us the Christ consciousness. Jesus came to show us the way of the heart and to show us the higher consciousness that we are all talking about here. Jesus came to say, “Look, I am going to live in a body, in the human body, and I’m going to show you how it’s done.” These are some of the principles and laws that you can use to live by . . . I don’t believe that Jesus came to start Christianity . . . I am a Christian who believes that there are certainly many more paths to God other than Christianity.

Now, how do these flowery words of Oprah Winfrey sound when you place them next to the words of Jesus in John 14:6? “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” Compare the preaching of Oprah with that of the apostle Peter in Acts 4:12. Peter proclaims, “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.” And then there are the words of our text for this Sunday of *The Holy Trinity*: “I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior (Isaiah 43:11).”

What we find in Oprah is essentially what has become progressive, liberal, American Christianity/Religion. It is no longer, “you shall have no other gods.” It is far from what Jesus says to Satan, “You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve (Matt. 4:10).” Now, there are “many paths to what you call God.” We are to accept that there are “many diverse ways of being (living) in the world.” We have no right to consider which way is good and which way is wrong. Therefore, we are to be empathetic. And while the idea of forgiveness is very important to Oprah, it is a forgiveness without atonement in Jesus; as she says, “there are millions of ways to please God.” God is not a lawgiver, nor is the fulfilment of the law understood as love, and God is not a judge *per se*; consequently, the cross is emptied of its meaning. Everything is up to you. One writer observes: “She promises meaning without truth, acceptance without judgment, and fulfillment without self-denial (Dr. R. Albert Mohler Jr.)”

Again, this is progressive, liberal, American Christianity/Religion. True, there are many variations of this, many angles and qualifications, but this is essentially the spiritual darkness that has descended upon us. It has nothing to do with the words of the apostle Paul when he writes in 1 Timothy 5:5-6: “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.” It has nothing to do with what the apostle John writes: “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life (1 John 5:12).” We need to remember that the Creator of the Universe, our Savior says through the prophet: “I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other (Isaiah 45:5-6).”

Again, the words of our text. "I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior." Light has come into the world. But, this unbelieving world will not have any of it. As it is written:

Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of his servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God. Behold, all you who kindle a fire, who equip yourselves with burning torches! Walk by the light of your fire, and by the torches that you have kindled! This you have from my hand: you shall lie down in torment (Isaiah 50:10-11).

And why is it that there is such overwhelming resistance to the true light who reveals all things? Jesus says that "everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God (John 3:19-21)." This unbelieving world cannot handle the fact that it is nothing, not good, not right, and has nothing apart from the Triune God. They hate the Jesus of the Bible because he testifies to the truth about this unbelieving world - "that its works are evil (John 7:7)."

But for all those who hear his voice and confess their sins, that they are nothing and have nothing good apart from him, the true God is faithful and just, and will forgive their sins and cleanse them from all unrighteousness. Despite the fact that a verdict has been issued against us, for we were once no different than this unbelieving world, still "God, being rich in mercy," Paul writes, "because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved (Ephesians 2:4-5)!" Everything is not left up to us. Rather, salvation is a free gift from the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - there is no other - the only God who saves us!

The mystery of the Trinity, that God is three in one, has been given to the church for a reason. A mystery is intended to grab our attention that we may enter into a deep contemplation and marveling of what is mysterious. We hold onto what has been revealed in the mystery, that we might receive all that it is intended to give, and make no mistake about it, the mystery is intended to save us.

God, by an eternal association, has joined the human nature to Himself. Consequently, God truly cares for us and loves us. He is truly our soul mate and desires to have us as His companion without end. He will never remove from Himself the assumed human nature. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son." The Word became flesh, sent by the Father, conceived by the Holy Spirit, that He might be our Redeemer and extinguish wrath against sin, saving us from death and damnation. And by the Holy Spirit, the Father kindles the light of Christ into our hearts that we might believe and be His children and the eternal bride of His Son. The Holy Spirit preserves us in the faith and keeps us safe until the end.

The Trinity is mysterious, and it is beyond all human comprehension, but God has chosen to reveal much about Himself in this age. He reveals himself to us in the person and work of Jesus, who lived a perfect life on our behalf, who suffered and died for our sins on the cross, so that we might have forgiveness. What a marvelous thing it is to consider that God gives himself again to us, despite our rebellion against him. And because Jesus is God of very God, we have seen the Father through him, and

in him we know true love and the hope of living forever in all that is and ever shall be. The marveling of this great mystery is supposed to go on for the rest of our lives until we know him face to face. In the day when we will be in his glory, we will forever glory in knowing and being known. And isn't that what we really want - to be known and to know and live in such continual knowledge and live in pure life? Indeed! To be known and to know in every way is love. This is what we crave and seek in this fallen world. It is truly heartbreaking that this unbelieving world creates for itself a light that is no light. It is by grace that we have been saved through faith, and this not from ourselves, but a gift from the only true God.

The Father is eternal love, the Son is the eternal revelation of love, and the Spirit is love loving. And this beautiful love of the Trinity has been given to us. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." Our salvation then is of the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. This is what we know and believe about the only true God, the Triune God. The Father sends his Son to save us, the Son becomes flesh to save us, and the Spirit conceives the Son into flesh for our Salvation - and that is why the Athanasian creed says in opposition to Oprah Winfrey and progressive, liberal, American Christianity/Religion: "This is the true Christian faith. Unless a man believe this firmly and faithfully, he cannot be saved."

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott