

I. Introduction

- A. One of the most beautiful promises Jesus ever made is found in the Gospel According to St. Matthew.
 - 1. *"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."* (Matthew 11:28-30, NAB)
- B. Jesus promised this beautiful gift called: Rest for your soul.
- C. Come to me, and I will give it to you. Rest.
- D. Not religious exhaustion. Not spiritual anxiety. Not a lifetime of wondering whether you have done enough, confessed enough, suffered enough, purified enough, or paid enough.
- E. Rest for your soul.
- F. That phrase is going to haunt this sermon.
- G. Because every religious system has to answer a non-negotiable question:
- H. Not pageantry. Not tradition. Not mystery. Not religious motion. Not candles, incense, robes, rituals, prayers, sacraments, or centuries of institutional authority.
- I. Those things may be beautiful. Some of them may even be meaningful.
 - 1. But can they give rest to a troubled conscience?
 - 2. Can they tell the sinner, "Your debt is paid"?
 - 3. Can they tell the hurting, "There is comfort for you" or the confused, "There is a guide for you," or the Exploited and Oppressed, "the scales of justice will be balanced on your behalf by the Judge of the living and the dead."
 - 4. Can they tell the dying, "Today you will be with me in heaven"?
 - 5. Can they tell the guilty, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"?
 - a) Can you give me rest for my soul?
- J. That is the question every system of religion, philosophy, and thought has to answer.

II. Welcome

- A. Welcome to part three of our series, **"What's the Difference?"**
- B. In this series, we are looking at different religious traditions and asking an honest question: what is the difference between what we believe and teach here at Pathway, and what these other systems teach?
- C. And I want to say again, as clearly as I can: we are not here to mock people. We are not here to insult sincere believers.
- D. People all around the world in every faith system are serious, devout, and intelligent. I respect anyone with the courage of their convictions.
- E. So this is not personal animosity. This is theological clarity.
- F. Because truth matters. And if Jesus said the truth will set you free, then falsehood, even religious falsehood, will keep you stuck.
 - 1. The thing that breaks my heart is this:
 - 2. Most religions produce more stress than rest for the souls of their followers.
- G. I am saying this because I love people and because the gospel is too good to bury under a mountain of duties, obligations, and religious checklists.
- H. So my talk today is called:
 - 1. **What's a Nice Italian Boy Like You Doing in a Non-Catholic Church, part 2**
- I. So today we are asking one question through three doctrines: is the work of Christ finished, or isn't it?
- J. That is the difference.

III. Personal Connection

- A. I have a personal connection to this tradition.
- B. I was baptized in a Roman Catholic church as an infant. My dad's is Italian, and in an Italian family, Catholicism is not just religion. It is culture.
 - 1. It is candles and incense. It is eating fish on Christmas Eve. It is rosaries on dashboards, saint medals on rearview mirrors, priests at hospital bedsides, and Mass cards at funerals.
 - 2. I know this world. I have affection for this world.
- C. As a pastor, I have done funerals alongside Catholic priests. I have performed weddings in Catholic churches.
- D. So hear me carefully.
 - 1. My goal is not to get in a cheap shot against Catholicism.
 - 2. My goal is this: if you are going to be Catholic, be a saved Catholic. And I want to show you how you can do that today. I will actually walk you through it. It won't be weird. I won't single you out. Just a silent prayer.
- E. Because Jesus did not say, "Come to a religion, all who labor and are burdened, and I will give you more religious assignments."
- F. He said, "Come to ME, I will give you rest."

IV. Things I Admire and Respect

- A. Before we talk about areas where we disagree, let me add to what I said last time about things I admire in the Catholic tradition.
 - 1. The Catholic Church has cared for the poor, the sick, the unborn, the elderly, and the vulnerable on a scale that is historically undeniable.
 - 2. The Catholic intellectual tradition has produced some of the most serious minds in Western history: Augustine, Aquinas, Newman, Chesterton, and others.
 - 3. The Catholic witness on the sanctity of human life has often been courageous when the rest of the culture became cowardly.
- B. So I am not saying there is no beauty there.
 - 1. I am saying beauty cannot save you.

2. A hospital network cannot remove eternal guilt. An intellectual tradition cannot purify your conscience. A moral stance cannot pay your sin debt.
- C. Only faith alone a crucified Savior can do that.
 1. So here is the acid test: do the teachings of your system give you rest for your soul or stress for your soul?
- D. If I could say in two words the output of historic biblical Christianity, it would be: "Unburden Yourself."
- E. So let's look at three areas of difference between what Catholics believe and what Evangelicals believe... and why I'm not a Catholic.

V. 1. THE MASS: Is Christ's Sacrifice Finished Or Ongoing?

A. The Catholic Claim

1. A gathering of Catholic leaders in the 1500's, called the Council of Trent, issued a definitive decree on the sacrifice of the Mass.
2. It states that in the Mass, Christ is sacrificed again in an unbloody manner, and that this sacrifice is truly propitiatory — meaning the Mass actually pays the price for sin.
3. Canon 1 of Session 22 declares:
 - a) "If anyone says that in the Mass a true and proper sacrifice is not offered to God, or that to be offered is nothing else but that Christ is given us to eat, let him be anathema." (Canon 1)
4. Canon 3 goes further:
 - a) "If anyone says that the sacrifice of the Mass is merely one of praise and thanksgiving, or that it is a bare commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross, but not a propitiatory one... let him be anathema." (Canon 3)
5. The language is deliberate. The Mass is a REAL sacrifice. Propitiatory. Ongoing. Real.
6. Through the Mass, God's wrath is appeased, and pardon and grace are obtained. The priest, standing at the altar, is not merely symbolizing Christ's death — he is, in Catholic theology, presenting that sacrifice again in an ongoing, real, and efficacious way.
7. The Mass is not a symbol. It is, in Catholic doctrine, a sacrifice.
8. Actually. Daily. Globally. Repeatedly.

B. The Evangelical Response

1. And here is where the Evangelical divergence becomes very simple.
 - a) *"Every priest stands daily at his ministry, offering frequently those same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But this one offered one sacrifice for sins, and took his seat forever at the right hand of God."* (Hebrews 10:11-12, NAB)
2. Do you see the contrast?
3. **"Every priest stands. Jesus sat down."**
 - a) The priest stands because the work continues. Jesus sits because the work is complete.
 - b) The priest stands because another sacrifice must be offered. Jesus sits because no other sacrifice remains.
4. You do not sit down when there is more atoning work to do.
 - a) You sit down when the job is done.
 - b) And Jesus Christ, the Son of God, offered one sacrifice for sins and sat down forever.
 - (1) I'm here to tell you that if Jesus can rest from his work to save you, then you can rest too.
5. I want to push this deeper. Because what makes the Catholic Mass work theologically is the a Catholic teaching called:

VI. 2. TRANSUBSTANTIATION: What are the elements of the Lord's Supper?

A. The Catholic Claim

1. This teaching says that when the priest consecrates the bread and wine at the altar, a change takes place.
 - a) Not a symbolic change.
 - (1) The bread literally becomes the body of Christ.
 - (2) The wine literally becomes the blood of Christ.
 - b) What remains — the look, the taste, the feel — is *appearance* only. The substance is gone, replaced entirely.
 - c) And therefore, when you consume the consecrated elements, you are consuming Christ's actual body and blood.
2. The official Catechism says:
 - a) "...It has always been the conviction of the Church... that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation." — CCC 1376 (citing Trent, Session XIII, ch. 4)
3. A mystical miraculous sub-molecular transformation of the substance happens when the priest lifts the cup and the bread and blesses them.

B. The Evangelical Response

1. As evangelicals, we believe that the bread and wine are symbols of the body and blood of Christ. You cannot repeat the sacrifice of Christ in any meaningful way; to repeat it is to undermine its value.
 - a) *"Not that he might offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest [under Judaism] enters each year into the sanctuary with blood that is not his own; if that were so, he would have had to suffer repeatedly from the foundation of the world. But now once for all he has appeared at the end of the ages to take away sin by his sacrifice."* (Hebrews 9:25-26, NAB)
 - b) Once for all.
 - c) Not repeatedly. Not continually.
 - d) Not altar after altar, Mass after Mass, priest after priest. Once for all.
2. And when we take the Lord's Supper, St Paul explains what we are doing.

- (1) "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes." (1 Corinthians 11:26, NAB)
- b) You proclaim the death of the Lord.
 - (1) Communion is a proclamation, not a re-sacrifice.
- c) Jesus set it up this way:
 - (1) "Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.'" (Luke 22:19 NAB)
 - (a) We are remembering a moment from the past.
 - (b) We are proclaiming history's darkest day.
 - (2) We're not making it happen. We're announcing that it already happened.
- d) Think of the communion as God opening a window in time so the Church can stand at the foot of the Cross and remember what happened that day.
- e) The Lamb was slain. His body was broken. His blood was shed. The debt was paid. The work is finished. Salvation is mine because Jesus is mine.
 - (1) Isn't that rest for your soul?

VII. 3. PURGATORY: Is Purification Complete Or Still Pending?

1. I have gone to many Catholic funerals. I especially remember my grandmother and my grandfather's funerals. There was a book on a table where guests could sign in and let the family know they were there.
2. Beside that book was a little rack and in that rack was a number of envelopes, each containing a card. At the time when I was a kid, I thought those cards were something like condolence cards.
3. Later I found out they weren't. They were Mass cards.
4. A Mass card was a generous gift from loving friends who paid hundreds of dollars to various monasteries and convents. In exchange, the sisters and brothers in these places, promised to pray for my recently deceased grandparents, every year on the anniversary of their deaths, in order to shorten their time in the fires of purgatory.
5. The official Catechism of the Catholic Church, says:
 - a) "All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven." (CCC 1030)
6. The traditional theological understanding — held by Aquinas, Augustine, and the majority of Catholic theologians — says Purgatory includes real suffering as part of the purgatorial process.
 - a) "The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire." (CCC 1031)
7. For the faithful Catholic who dies there is fire and suffering and only then Purgatory.
8. Plus, the Catholic Church offers no clarity on how long purgatory lasts. But in popular devotion, the duration is measured in years, and the faithful are left with a haunting impression: it could be a very long time.
9. **That is the shadow the Catholic faithful live under — the fear that between death and heaven lies not a moment but a millennium of fire and suffering.**
10. To me, the weight of that is painful.
 - a) A grandmother dies. A grandfather, mother, father, loved one dies.
 - (1) And instead of the family resting in the finished work of Christ, there is this terrible shadow.
 - (a) Are they suffering? How long will they suffer? Have enough Masses been said? Has enough purification happened yet? What can I do? What should I do? How much should I spend? What indulgences should I buy?
 - i) Is that rest or is it stress?

B. The Evangelical Response

1. Our reply as Evangelicals, would be what does the Bible say?
 - a) "When he had accomplished purification from sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Hebrews 1:3, NAB)
2. Another official Catholic translation literally uses the the word "purgation." Jesus effected "purgation from sins" (DRA).
 - a) Which makes me ask:
 - b) Why do you have to go to Purgatory to obtain purgation for sins Jesus already purged?**
3. He literally *accomplished* purification. He effected humanity's purgation from sin.
 - a) Not started it.
 - b) He accomplished it and then he sat down.
 - c) Sins are paid for once for all.
4. **Rest in this. Believe in this. If you have Jesus Christ, when you close your eyes to this present world, you open them in heaven.**
 - a) You go straight home to Jesus.
 - b) Why? Because your purification is already complete, by the death of Jesus on the Cross, accomplished by someone else on your behalf two thousand years ago.

VIII. Other Differences

- A. We differ on the teachings of Penance. (Colossians 2:13-14)
- B. We differ on the teachings of Holy Days of Obligation. (Galatians 4:10-11)
- C. We differ on the idea of praying to saints. (Matthew 6:9)

- D. We differ on the mediation of priests. (1 Timothy 2:5)
- E. We differ on the idea of a celibate clergy. (1 Timothy 4:1-3)
 - 1. But to bring it all together, this is the biggest difference of all:
- IX. The Finished Work Of Christ
 - A. So here is the difference.
 - 1. The question is not whether Catholics are sincere. Many are.
 - 2. The question is not whether Catholics have beautiful traditions. They do.
 - 3. The question is not whether Catholics have done good in the world. They have.
 - B. The central difference is an answer to this question:
 - 1. Is Christ Alone enough?
 - 2. Is his sacrifice enough?
 - 3. Is his blood enough?
 - 4. Is his resurrection enough?
 - 5. Is his intercession enough?
 - 6. Is his finished work enough?
 - a) Because if it is not enough, then you should be terrified.
 - 7. If Christ must still be offered, you cannot rest.
 - a) If purification must still be completed after death, you cannot rest.
 - b) If satisfaction must still be performed by you, you cannot rest.
 - C. You can be religious.
 - 1. You can be devout.
 - 2. You can be sincere, sacramental, moral, and good. But you will also be exhausted and you cannot have rest for your soul.
 - a) Because such rest only comes when the saving work is finished.
 - D. And I have good news.
 - 1. THE WORK IS FINISHED.
 - a) On the cross, Jesus did not say, "It has begun."
 - b) He did not say, "The church will complete it."
 - c) He did not say, "The priests will continue it."
 - d) He did not say, "The Mass will re-present it."
 - e) He did not say, "Purgatory will finish it."
 - f) He did not say, "Your penance will supplement it."
 - (1) In his dying breaths... He said, "*It is finished.*" (John 19:30, NAB)
 - 2. Finished means finished.
 - a) The sacrifice is finished.
 - b) The atonement is finished.
 - c) The wrath-bearing is finished.
 - d) The debt-paying is finished.
 - e) The purification is finished.
 - f) The condemnation is finished.
 - g) The barrier is finished.
 - h) The forgiveness is finished.
 - i) The gift of salvation is finished.
 - (1) Heaven was opened.
 - (2) The way was made.
 - (3) The Lamb was slain.
 - (4) The blood was accepted.
 - (5) The grave was emptied.
 - (6) The Son ascended.
 - (7) The Savior sat down.
 - 3. Four times the Catholic Bible uses the wonderful phrase, "**Once for all.**"
 - a) He sacrificed himself "once for all" (Hebrews 7:27)
 - b) He obtained eternal redemption "once for all" (Hebrews 9:12)
 - c) He took away sin "once for all" (Hebrews 9:26).
 - d) He made us holy by his death "once for all" (Hebrews 10:10)
 - 4. Once for all. Say that to your guilt.
 - 5. Once for all. Say that to your shame.
 - 6. Once for all. Say that to your fear of dying.
 - 7. Once for all. Say that to every accusation of the devil.
 - 8. **ONCE FOR ALL.**
 - a) **Say that to every religious system that tries to put the burden back on your shoulders that Jesus already carried to Calvary.**
 - 9. You do not need any other sacrifice, mediator, purgatory, penance, or payment.
 - 10. Jesus took care of everything once for all.

- a) That's Good News.
- b) That's the Gospel.
- c) That's rest for your soul.

X. Invitation

- A. And if you are here today carrying Catholic guilt, Baptist guilt, Protestant guilt, private guilt, secret guilt, old guilt, fresh guilt, hear the voice of Jesus.
 - 1. *"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest."* (Matthew 11:28, NAB)
 - a) Not stress.
 - b) Rest.
 - (1) Not uncertainty. Rest.
 - (2) Not "try harder." Rest.
 - (3) Not "pay more." Rest.
 - (4) Not "suffer longer." Rest.
 - (5) Not "maybe someday." Rest.
 - (6) Rest for your soul.
 - 2. Because Christ has done what you could never do.
 - a) He lived the life you failed to live.
 - b) He died the death you deserved to die.
 - c) He bore the wrath you could never survive.
 - d) He paid the debt you could never repay.
 - e) He removed the sin you could never cleanse.
 - f) He rose from the grave you could never escape.
 - g) He sat down in victory you could never earn.
 - 3. And now he does not say, "Work your way to me."
 - a) He says, "Come to me."
 - (1) Come empty-handed.
 - (2) Come guilty.
 - (3) Come tired.
 - (4) Come ashamed.
 - (5) Come unbaptized, unconfirmed, and uncommuned.
 - b) Just come to him. Come to Christ.
 - (1) Not to an altar where he is offered again, but to a throne where he is seated forever.
 - (2) Come to Christ.
 - (3) Not because you finished your work.
 - (4) But because he finished his.
 - (5) Once for all.
 - (a) Once for sin.
 - (b) Once for sinners.
 - (c) Once for the weary.
 - (d) Once for the guilty.
 - (e) Once for the dying.
 - (f) Once for all who believe.
 - c) And if you are in Christ, you can know, not guess, not hope vaguely, not tremble in uncertainty, you can know that you have eternal life.
 - (a) *"I write these things to you so that you may know that you have eternal life, you who believe in the name of the Son of God."* (1 John 5:13, NAB)
 - d) **Your salvation never once rested in the strength of your grip on him. It has always rested on the grip of his gracious, nail-pierced hands.**
 - (1) What's the difference? That's the difference. That is the Gospel.
 - (2) That is rest for your soul, true, blood bought, lasting, and forever. And now...

XI. Invitation (ABCs)

- A. I stated at the beginning I wanted to give you a chance to be saved today. Not to talk about it, but walk you through it too. I will not single you out. I will not embarrass you. You can become a saved Catholic today. Or saved Baptist or save Lutheran or whatever.
- B. Admit. Believe. Choose.