Close to 170 members. Open Bible Lutheran Church. If we would interview everyone of our members, and asked them if they thought they were going to heaven, they would probably say “Of Course”. But will you all be in heaven? How about those people who used to be members of Open Bible Lutheran Church. Let’s interview them. “Well I might not be going to any church right now, but I am a good person, and I am sure that God will take me to heaven!” How about doing a community survey of people in our neighborhood? I did one of these in my old congregation in Bay City, Michigan. I surveyed some 500 homes. I went out with my clipboard, knocked on doors, and politely identified myself to the people, and asked if I could ask a couple of questions. One of the questions was whether the person thought they were going to heaven after death. 

Guess what? 95% of the people surveyed thought they were going to be in heaven? Interesting. In the book of Ecclesiastes, we are told that God has placed eternity in the hearts of man. In other words, everyone has this longing for something that will last forever, that this life is not all there is. And you know, they are right. There is more. There is a heaven and a hell. But are 95% of the people in our world going to heaven?

As you look at our reading today, just the opposite is going to be the case. Few are going to be in heaven one day. Jesus tells us that many will try to get into heaven, in other words, the majority of society, but they will not be able to enter. Jesus will cast them aside, call them evildoers. The majority of society will be cast into hell, where the torture does not end, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

These people will plead that Jesus have second thoughts about sending them to hell. They will say things like, “I went to confirmation class at Open Bible” “I was a member at Open Bible! I read parts of the Bible during my lifetime. My grandfather was a Baptist minister. I prayed to God several times in my life.” But Jesus will say to these shocked people, “I don’t know you or where you come from.” Away from me you evildoers.” And the door to heaven will be locked from them forever.

Today, I want to make sure that none of you here today, experiences this eternal shock treatment. Where you find yourself seeing Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and other Christians having a fantastic time in heaven, and you are locked out, always tormented with the thought of what might have been. It is time to slap yourself today, to stay alert, and “Make Every Effort to Enter through the Narrow Door!”

There seem to be two myths out there today, that most people are buying into. The first myth is this: All religions are basically the same. So it doesn’t matter which one that you believe. All spiritual paths, in other words, lead up the mountain to God in one way or the other.

Yet with one outlandish assertion, Jesus Christ boldly takes Christianity and He puts it in a separate class by itself. Jesus says, I am the way the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father but by me.” There is but one way up the mountain. Jesus is unlike any other religious leader who ever walked the planet. Listen to the difference between what other religious leaders say and what Jesus says. Other religious leaders say, “Follow me and I will show you how to find the truth.” Jesus says, “I am the truth.” Other religious leaders say, “Follow me and I’ll show you the way to salvation.” Jesus says, “I am the way to eternal life.” Other religious leaders say, “Follow me and I’ll show you how you can become enlightened.”

But Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” Other religious leaders say, “Follow me and I’ll show you many doors that lead to God.” But Jesus said, “I am the door.”
Other religious leaders say, “Follow me and I’ll show you how you can find spiritual nourishment.” But Jesus said, “I am the bread of life.” Then Jesus said, “So, follow Me.”

You see the difference? For a long time people tried to harmonize, find commonality between the different religions of the world. But there are drastic and irreconcilable differences between Christianity on the one hand and all other belief systems on the other hand.

As I’ve studied world religions through the years, what I found is that all religions other than Christianity are basically based on the idea of people doing something through their struggling and through their striving to somehow earn the good favor of God. You’ve got to use a Tibetan prayer wheel or you’ve got to go on pilgrimages or you’ve got to give alms to the poor or you’ve got to avoid eating certain foods or you have to pray in a certain way or you have to go through a series of reincarnations. They are all attempts of people to reach out to God. But Jesus Christ is God’s attempt to reach out to people. Jesus taught the opposite of what these other world religions taught. He said that nobody could earn their way into heaven so you might as well stop trying. He said two things that are very consistent with our human experience. First, we’re all guilty of wrongdoing. And you know that’s true. Not one person here would claim they’re perfect. It resonates with our experience to say, “Yeah, that’s true. Everybody falls short.” Then Jesus said, our wrongdoing separates us from God. We know from our experience that that’s true, too. Has there ever been a time in your life when you’ve felt that God is distant, detached from you? Of course. We’ve all felt that. Why? Because our wrongdoing has created a gulf, a separation between us and God. Because God, by His nature, is a righteous judge, our wrongdoing must be paid for. But out of His love for us, Jesus Christ voluntarily offered to be our substitute, to pay the penalty for the sin that we deserve so that we wouldn’t have to. And what Christ did becomes ours simply by faith in Him as the Savior. So other religions are irreconcilable with Christianity in terms of how you become reconciled with God. And there’s also other major differences as well.

The second myth that we want to dispel today is this: Christians are arrogant when they say that Jesus is the only way to heaven. I’d agree that Christians were being arrogant if the truth of the matter were there were many ways to get to heaven and they were just saying, “Ours is the best.” But that’s not what they’re saying. They’re saying, the truth of the matter is someone has got to pay the penalty for the obvious wrongdoing we committed. Who’s it going to be? Is it going to be us paying in eternity? Or is it going to be Jesus Christ, paying as our substitute? He’s the only one qualified by His sinlessness and His divinity to be our substitute. That’s reality. The reality is it’s not arrogant to act upon the evidence. Christians aren’t being narrow-minded when they say there is only one way to the Father. Analogy: A baby is born. Shortly after birth the baby develops severe jaundice. You may be familiar with jaundice. It’s a liver disorder that caused the whites of their eyes and their skin to turn very yellow. The doctor told them that this is a potentially devastating disorder. But fortunately there is an easy cure for it. All you have to do to cure a baby of jaundice is put the baby under a special light. The skin absorbs this light and it stimulates the liver to function properly. That’s what the doctor told my friend. My friend could have responded by saying, “Wait a minute! That’s sounds too easy! Put her under a light? How about instead if we just scrubbed her
with soap and dipped her in bleach? I'm sure if we really scrubbed her hard enough we could get her skin coloring back to its normal self.” The doctor would have said, “You don’t understand. There is only one way to cure severe jaundice.”

The parents could have replied, “I don’t like this one way thing. How about if we just ignore it and pretend that everything’s ok? And if we sincerely believe that we don't have to do anything then in the end everything’s going to work out?” The doctor would have said, “You’re going to jeopardize the life of your child if you do that. There’s only one way to cure jaundice. You’re hesitant because it sounds too easy. But look at the credentials on my wall, look at my medical degree. I studied in medical school. I’ve cured countless babies of jaundice. Trust me based on my credentials.”

Would anybody accuse those parents of being narrow minded if they trusted that doctor – a doctor with credibility and credentials – when he said there’s only one way, one course of treatment that would cure their baby? Would it be narrow-minded for them to pursue that course of treatment? It’s not arrogant to act upon the evidence.

The truth of the matter is we all have a terminal illness called sin. The reason that those of us who are Christians cling to Jesus Christ is because He is the great physician. He’s the only one who has the medication that can cure. We can try to scrub away our sins by doing good deeds. It’s not going to work. We can ignore it and hope it all goes away. But it won’t disappear. We can sincerely think there is another way of dealing with it. But we will be sincerely wrong. The truth of the matter is, only the great physician offers the treatment that will erase the stain of our sin. And we turn to God, Jesus Christ, as that one way. It’s not being narrow-minded. We’re acting in accordance with the evidence.

What evidence? 1. First, Jesus validates His claim to being the one and only Son of God because Jesus Christ is the only individual in the history of the world to fulfill dozens of ancient prophecies that were written hundreds of years before He was even born on this earth in Bethlehem. Nobody has been able to do this except Jesus Christ.

2. He validates His claim by His unprecedented character. So many times when you get to know someone, better and better, you see their shortcomings more and more obviously. But the opposite was true of Jesus Christ. As His followers spent more time with Him, got to know Him more, they increasingly marveled at His purity and His holiness and His integrity. In fact, nobody was closer to Him than Peter and John and listen to what they said after spending three years with Him in close proximity. John said, “In Him is no sin.” So His unique character validates His claim to being the one and only way to God. 3. He validated His claim by performing miracles He did them in broad daylight. He did them in front of skeptics and cynics. As a matter of fact you can look in books of ancient history of people who are opponents of Jesus Christ in ancient Jewish writing, in the Koran of Islam, they all admit that Jesus did the miraculous

4. The most spectacular demonstration of His deity: Jesus Christ fulfilled His own prediction and three days after He was put to death He was resurrected from the dead. And He was encountered by more than 500 eyewitnesses. Who else but the Son of God could spend three days in a tomb and then come forward and establish that He had returned to life. Christianity is not just a philosophy. It is a reality. Jesus didn’t just claim that He’s the one and only way to God. He validated His credentials and fully established His credibility.
So Christianity is unique, it can’t be reconciled with any other religion, it backs up its truth claims with credibility and credentials like no other system does. One day soon, we Christians will enjoy a heavenly feast in heaven, where people from all over the world will take their places. These will be the people, who knew and believed with all their heart, that Jesus was the only door to paradise. May you all here today join me on that day. May not one of you be lost. The Door is Narrow, but still passable. Amen.