

## Sermon- Who is Your Father?

Scripture: John 8:31-47

Sunday, August 26, 2018

If you have been paying attention to the level of intensity of the narrative in our journey through John, you will have noticed that the temperature has been gradually rising. When Jesus made his debut in ministry he performed a miracle a wedding, the changing of water into wine, but he performed it quietly without most people noticing even. And to the few who knew about it, he did not give any explanations. His first serious conversation with the Pharisees is in chapter 3 when Nicodemus comes and talks to Jesus, a conversation hidden from view in the middle of the night. In chapter 4 he heals a high officials son. So you can imagine that this miracle would have caught the attention of a few people. In chapter 5 Jesus does his third miracle but this time he heals this man while asking him to pick up his mat and walk, and in the process deliberately breaking a Sabbath rule made by the Pharisees. This puts Jesus in the direct cross hairs of the Pharisees. But not only that he explains his Sabbath healing by claiming to be the Son of God who has authority over the Sabbath. For the Pharisees who were already are looking for ways to get rid of Jesus, this is even more reason. But Jesus tells the people, that if they want to test what he is saying is true you, then 2 of the 4 things to pay close attention to are his teachings and his miracles. And just after saying this, in chapter 6 he scales up the size of his miracles by feeding 12000 people and even walking on water. After that he delivers his most difficult teaching yet, and his first I AM saying, I AM the Bread of Life. This is such a hard teaching that actually he loses all his followers except for the 12. But Jesus is far from done. Actually He ramps things up another notch when he moves the action to the heart of the Jewish world, right to the temple in Jerusalem during an important festival, the festival of booths. And there, with the backdrop of two key rituals, the water procession and the lighting of the ceremonial lamps, he presents 2

more I AM sayings. I AM the Water of Life and I AM the Light of the World. These sayings expressed clearly His divine and eternal identity. This powerful revelation of His identity causes some to reject and some to believe. To the people who claim to believe, Jesus now turns his attention and has a very intense conversation. We are going to examine this conversation that runs from verse 31 to the end of the chapter in two parts. But I wanted to walk you through this build up so you know that when Jesus is saying some things that are pretty difficult to hear that he did not start here. There was a carefully crafted method to Jesus' work.

I also want to point out that people are accountable in proportion to the revelation they are given. As Jesus gradually reveals more and more of who he is, the rejection of his message also takes on different levels of meaning. If you are presented a tiny glimpse of truth, if you miss it, it could mean you were not paying close attention. If you reject a distinct but dimly lit truth, it could be because you confused the light of revelation for something else. If you reject the clear light of truth, it may mean that light is just inconvenient to your life right now. But if you reject a clear and bright as the noon day sunlight of truth, it could be because you are a creature of the night and you and light don't go together at all. You see the implications of rejection of the different levels of rejection? So as Jesus turns on the light of his revelation more fully, it was inevitable that conversations would get very intense. So by the time we get to where we are in the narrative in John chapter 8, Jesus has revealed so much of his divine identity that rejection at this point is actually revealing the true nature of the hidden identities of many of the Pharisees. That is why today's exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees is so intense. So lets dive right in.

I want to remind you again that this conversation Jesus is having is directed at those who claimed to believe in Him, OK? To those people Jesus gives a simple instruction

attached to a promise. “You will be my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”.

At the outset he is telling those who believe, their belief level has to result in then being his disciples. And His disciples are one’s who are faithful to his teachings under all circumstances. And when you are faithful then this promise will come true. That you will develop an intimate knowledge of the truth. And that intimate knowledge of the truth will set you free. Set you free from what? Well, set you free from the bondage of sin in your life. Ok this was the simple truth that Jesus wanted to teach those who claimed to be “believers”.

Fair enough? Actually no because the moment Jesus said the truth will set you free, all hell broke loose. The Pharisees were so offended by the implication in Jesus’ statement that they were not free somehow. So they start chest pumping by reminding Jesus that they were descendents of Abraham and they have never been slaves to anyone.

Now if you think about Jesus’ statement, it is not an accusation, right? He is actually presenting a very simple exhortation to those who believe that if they remain faithful to his teachings that they would experience a very special kind of freedom.

But no, these so called believers want to talk about their prestigious lineage and how they “have never been slaves to anyone”. Now, Jesus was never talking about political freedom but even if he were let me bring you in on a little “not so secret, secret”. These people just celebrated the festival of booths, which is a festival focused on how the Israelites depended on God in the wilderness after they were liberated from slavery in Egypt! Let me let you in on another not so secret, secret. After the nation of Israel was established over the period of 1000 years, only the first 250 years was the whole nation independent of the rule of foreign powers. For 750 years they were slaves to the Assyrians, the Babylonians and as they were talking to Jesus they were slaves of the

Romans. See how ridiculous that statement was, even when talking about political freedom?

But Jesus was actually talking about a much deeper freedom, a freedom from sin. Verse 34, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin. <sup>35</sup>A slave is not a permanent member of the family, but a son is part of the family forever.<sup>36</sup> So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free". What Jesus was patiently explaining to them was that there is a kind of grip sin has on your life. That grip can be thought of as slavery. But even though slaves are in bondage, they have no permanent status. On the contrary a son has permanent status in a home. He is God's son, with permanent status in God's home and he can set slaves free and if he sets someone free, then they will be free indeed.

Now, you think that this gentle liberating message would be a welcome and hope giving message to the so called believers Jesus was talking to. Apparently not because they want to continue to insist on their lineage and that they are not slaves of anyone.

At this point, Jesus's revelation of himself is pretty bright. True that were are nowhere near the end of Jesus' ministry and His biggest works are still many chapters into the future. But there is enough revelation at this point to expose the rejection of the Pharisees as something coming from their true nature as creatures of the night. It is at this point that Jesus diagnoses the condition of the Pharisees and tells them, your actions are revealing that you are imitation someone who is your real father right now. You are uttering lies and some of you are trying to kill me. The one entity in the universe who lies and kills is the devil and your actions indicate that you are acting like the devils children. That's a harsh word you think? Well think about this. From God's perspective, your Father is the one whose behavior you have inherited, but the one whose genetics you have inherited. And if sin has a grip on your life then Jesus says, it is because you have inherited a behavior pattern from the devil.

Too harsh? I want you to consider this. If you go to the doctor and you have cancer. Would you want the doctor to tell you the truth or some lie that will make you feel good for a day? No, you want the truth because if you have the truth, you can get the right treatment, right? Now if you have Cancer, even if you have the accurate diagnosis, there may or may not be a cure for you. But, in this case, when Jesus diagnoses you, the Good news is that, you are not the only one who has this disease! The Bible says every single human being who every lives starts out as inheriting behavior traits from the devil. The only one who has no such behavior traits in Jesus Christ Himself. And the best news is that He has a cure. All you have to do is be willing to admit that you have this condition, you need the cure and then come to him to do what he tells you to do. Be faithful to his teachings. Then you will have an intimate knowledge of Him. And that intimate relationship with Jesus will liberate you from your slavery to sin and become a free and honored permanent member of Jesus' household. That is the lineage you really want.

But how can you change your father? Good question people! In John 3:3 Jesus tells this to Nicodemus, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again,<sup>[a]</sup> you cannot see the Kingdom of God." So the flip side of that is, when you are born again, you become part of the Kingdom of God. Even better you become part of the household of God with the status of a son in that household. Sorry if the gender offends anyone. In those days, it was the sons who inherited the land because they were responsible for tilling the fields. This is not offensive if you understand the meaning. It says, you men and women equally will inherit the status that the son had in those days in Gods house with God as your Father. Is this Good News to you?

In John chapter 3 it says. <sup>17</sup> God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.<sup>18</sup> "There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son. <sup>19</sup> And the judgment is based on this fact: God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were

evil. <sup>20</sup> All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed.

Of course having your sins exposed is painful enough to make you die in a sense. But would you resist that pain of exposure, if you knew that at the end of it you would have a new identity as God's child, you would have a new father, who would be God Himself. If this was the gift you were offered my friends, would you refuse?

Let me share the story of a man named Jacob McKelvy. Jacob had a younger sister who he was close so and when they were young his sister was bitten by a rattle snake and she died. Now Jacob grew up in a Mormon household and so he knew something about God and Jesus. But when his sister died, he grew so angry at God that he decided that he did not want anything to do with that God. Then he heard the message from Satan that you can be on Satan's side. And Satan's message is very clever. The message is, you can be your own god. That felt very empowering to him. So he went with it. Sound familiar to you. Remember the garden of Eden? Anyway as he pursued this new direction in his life, things began to really take off in his life. He founded a church called, believe it or not, the Greater Church of Lucifer. That church grew to become a nationwide movement. Then one day as he was driving along going to get some groceries, God literally wacked him on the back of his head and he felt a burning sensation to walk into a church he was driving past. That day the Pastor was not even there but he left a message, that pastor called him back, they spoke for hours and he gave his life to Christ and everything changed. That church is now closed. But God gave him a new ministry to reach people in cults and he is making an impact for Jesus now. Jacob McKelvy was not afraid to change his father and that changed everything.

Friends, this is what Jesus Christ is saying to each one of us today. Do you think of yourself as someone who believes who Jesus said he is? In that case ask yourself if you are faithfully following all the things he has taught. Because what Jesus wants are not

believers but disciples. And when you become a disciple, then only will you have an intimate knowledge of The Truth, which is the person of Jesus Christ. And when you have that intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ, you know that God is your Father. Then you will be free from all bondage to sin. Do you really want to be free? Christ can to show you the way. Let us pray.