

Pentecost

Text: John 8:48-59 (NIV)

⁴⁸The Jews answered him, “Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon–possessed?” ⁴⁹“I am not possessed by a demon,” said Jesus, “but I honor my Father and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge. ⁵¹I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.” ⁵²At this the Jews exclaimed, “Now we know that you are demon–possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that if anyone keeps your word, he will never taste death. ⁵³Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?” ⁵⁴Jesus replied, “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. ⁵⁵Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and keep his word. ⁵⁶Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.” ⁵⁷“You are not yet fifty years old,” the Jews said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!” ⁵⁸“I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” ⁵⁹At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

Theme: From where Did Jesus Come?

This weekend is a holiday weekend for us, and this text takes place during one of the great holidays for the Jews. It was the Feast of Tabernacles, which was their Thanksgiving. This occurred in late September. It was called the feast of Tabernacles, which means “tents” because it was to remind Israel of the time when their forefathers lived in tents as they traveled from Egypt to the promised land. However, it also looked forward to the day when God would tabernacle among us. In John 1:14 literally says, “The Word became flesh and tented among us.” So Jesus also came to this festival. Throughout the festive there was discussion with regard to Jesus’ home. When he began to teach, some of the people in the crowd said, “*We know where this man is from; when the Christ comes, no one will know where He is from.*” Later some of the people began to believe that Jesus is the Christ, but others said, “*How can the Christ come from Galilee? Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from David’s family and from Bethlehem?*” Later the leaders said, “*You will find that a prophet does not come from Galilee.*” Finally at the end of the discourse, they asked Him, “*Who do you make Yourself out to be?*” The question at the temple that day was from where did Jesus come?

I. A lot of people think that He was just a man from Nazareth.

That’s what many of the people were thinking that day. The beginning of chapter 7 is interesting. Jesus’ brothers were going to the Feast of Tabernacles, and they knew that there were people in Jerusalem who wanted to kill Him, so they encouraged Jesus to go to the Feast, so that He would be killed. Even His own family didn’t believe in Him. They saw Him as just another man from Nazareth. Many of the people at the festival had trouble believing in Him because they thought that He was from Nazareth, and they knew that the Savior would come from Bethlehem. They were impressed by His miracles and His teaching, but He didn’t seem to come from the right place. The leaders also thought that He was just a man from Nazareth. They were offended that a man from Nazareth would claim to be the Savior. They were so offended that they called Him both a Samaritan and demon possessed.

Many people today don't look at Jesus any better. They also see Him as nothing more than a Jewish man, who lived 2,000 year ago. There are some people who are intrigued by some of His teaching. They like how He said things like, "Love your enemies." They like His talk about forgiveness. His compassion for the poor, the outcasts, sinners, and the downtrodden also impresses them. They are somewhat impressed, but they don't know what to make of Him. Then there are other people who are offended by Him. Jesus says, "*If anyone keeps My word, He will never see death.*" That makes a lot of people think, "Who does He think He is?" What makes you Christians think that you know the way to eternal life. There are many religions. One is just as good as another or maybe they are all frauds. Our claim that there is no forgiveness and no eternal life outside of Jesus and no offend many people yet today. It even causes them to call us names just as they called Jesus names that day.

II. But His Words and works attest that He is not from this world.

Many people were amazed at both of them that day. When Jesus began to teach at the temple, many people were amazed and asked, "*How did this man get such learning without having studied?*" Jesus answer was, "*My teaching is not My own. It comes from Him who sent Me.*" Later Jesus said, "*I did one miracle (possibly the healing of a lame man), and you are all astonished.*" There was no one who could teach the way that Jesus did or do the miracles that He did if He were not from God. That is exactly what Nicodemus confessed in chapter 3 when He said, "*No one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with Him.*" (3:2) Jesus did many signs to show that He was from God, but the greatest was His resurrection from the dead. This was not the time yet, but when the time was right, Jesus allowed His enemies to seize Him. They nailed Him to a cross and thought that they were rid of Him when His body was placed in a grave, but He rose from the dead. He declared peace to those who trusted in Him.

His resurrection from the dead is the proof that He was from heaven. He told the Jewish leaders, "*Before Abraham was, I am.*" His point was that He is eternal. He was already alive at the time of Abraham. By saying, "I am," He was claiming to be the God who revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush. The man who had come to the festival from Nazareth, was also the eternal Son of God, begotten of the Father before the creation of the world. It was by Him that all things were made. This eternal Son of God took on our flesh to bring God's unending love into this world. By His resurrection Jesus proved that He is the promised Savior that Abraham and all the Old Testament patriarchs looked forward to.

III. What does it matter to us where Jesus came from?

If He were just a man from Nazareth, the Jewish leaders would have been right. He would have been demon possessed. Everything that He promised would have been a lie. Had Jesus never risen from the dead to prove that the Father accepted His sacrifice for our sins, all of us, who trust in Him, would be lost forever. Every claim that Jesus made would have been false. There would be no forgiveness, no peace, and no eternal life.

But because Jesus came from the Father and returned to the Father at His ascension, His Word is truth. He promises, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word, He will never see death.*" We all want to preserve our lives. Someone told me this week, "I want to stay on this side of the grass." Christ is the only one who can save us from death. He did it by giving His innocent life in

our place. He saves us through the washing of water and the Spirit in Holy Baptism in which we are born again to a new life in Him. He saves us with the forgiveness of all of our sins. We have life to the full now, and even when our bodies die, they only rest for a time. When He returns from His glory in Heaven, He will raise our bodies to be like His glorious body. It is through Him and Him alone that we have the sure hope of eternal life.

That hope is grounded in where Jesus came from. He came from the Father in order to save us. The early Christians had a symbol for that. It was the symbol of the fish. The Greek word for fish is ICHTHUS. The letters of that word became an acronym for this confession of faith, "Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Savior." When we know where He came from, we know where we are going. He will come back to take us to be with Him in His glory forever. Thanks be to God for that sure hope, which is grounded in where Jesus our Savior came from.

Amen.

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