

Sermon, 2018.05.06

Title: Questioning Jesus "Before Abraham was, I am"

Text: John 8:31-36; 51-59

Theme: The most important promises of the Christian faith depend first on whether the claims made by Jesus about His own identity are true, and second how we respond to those claims.

31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." 33 They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" 34 Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. 35 Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

51 Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death." 52 At this they exclaimed, "Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death. 53 Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?" 54 Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. 55 Though 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 obey his word. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad." 57 "You are not yet fifty years old," they said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!" 58 "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" 59 At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

## I. Introduction

A. The questions we ask this morning.

1. Who does Christ say He is?
2. Who do His listeners say He is?
3. Who do you say He is?

B. The promises of Christianity depend on the truth of Christ's claim.

C. Doubt your doubts and consider the person, claims, and teaching of Jesus.

## II. Who does Jesus say He is?

A. His audience "believes" Him superficially, but they are slaves to sin. Verses 31, 33. *31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my*

*teaching, you are really my disciples. 33 They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"*

B. The two promises to His listeners.

1. Verses 31-32, *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*
2. Verse 51, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."*

C. Children of Abraham, putting their faith in religion.

1. Verse 33, *"We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How can you say, 'You will be set free'?"*
2. Calvin's Commentary, John 8: 32-34
3. V 34, *"Jesus replied, 'Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.'*
4. R.V Tasker

D. His illustration of the master, the son, and the slave. Verses 35-36, *"Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."*

E. **Verse 51**, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."*

F. Verse 53: *"Who do you think you are?"*

G. Verse 56 Jesus says, *"Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."* Two ways of understanding Verse 56.

1. Tragedy — "The Day."

- a. **Isaiah 13:6** *"Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come!."*
- b. Joel 1:15; 2:11; and 3:14; Job 21; Ezekiel 30: verses 2 and 3; Zephania 1: verses 7 and 14; Amos 5: verses 18 and 20
- c. Psalm 96: 11-13, *'Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy. Let all creation rejoice*

*before the Lord , for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness.'*

2. Comedy

- a. **Verse 57**, *"So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"*
- b. His listeners turn to ridicule. They say, you knew Abraham, he actually saw you? How? The magic school bus maybe. A genie in a bottle?

H. Verse 58: "Before Abraham was born, I am"

1. Exodus Chapter 3 where Moses met God in the burning bush and in Verses 13 and 14 Moses says, *"Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"* 14 God said to Moses, *"I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'"*
2. Intellectually, it's the most profound revelation of God that there has ever been.
3. The most sacred name, the highest expression of God's name for Himself.
4. When Jesus takes the name, I Am, it's not just the most profound name intellectually but personally as well.
5. Verse 59, *"At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds."*

III. Who do the listeners in John 8 think He is?

A. What Jesus is not.

1. Not a good teacher.
2. Illustration: A man gives a speech at St. Johns claiming to be God.
3. The radical message of Jesus Christ offends His listeners. Here in **Verse 52** they say, *"Now we know that you are demon-possessed!"*
4. Lewis' Trilemma from Mere Christianity

B. The objections to who Jesus claims He is.

1. The legend of Jesus.

2. The effect of denying Christ's deity.

- a. On scripture.
- b. On His other claims.
- c. On our problem with sin.

C. The only response to the message of Christ.

1. Crown Me or Kill Me.
2. Tim Keller's quote about not being in the middle.
3. Every claim of Christ is interlaced with Who He said He is.
4. Sitting in the middle lacks intellectual integrity

III. Who do you say He is?

A. The exclusivity of Christ. John 14:6, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

1. Other religions preach morality and goodness.
2. Christianity says your situation is too dire, you can never be good enough.
3. **G.K. Chesterton** says, *"Original sin is the only doctrine that's been empirically validated by 2,000 years of human history."*
4. The terminal illness analogy of Tim Keller.

B. No question you ever answer will be more important than this one. Given the magnitude of Christ's claim, you can't afford not to be sure.

C. Charles Haddon Spurgeon on the justice of God.

1. **1 John 1:9**. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* He doesn't say He's merciful to forgive, but *just* to forgive.
2. Thanks to the blood of Christ, God's justice is as much a help to us as His mercy.

IV. Application

A. For those leaning against believing the claim of Christ

1. Hard to believe but harder not to.
2. Alternate explanations are even more fantastic.
3. The person of Christ.
4. The teaching of Christ.
5. The transformation of Christ's followers.

B. For those who are Christians

1. Those listening to Jesus claimed they were saved because they're the offspring of Abraham. But religion will crush you. It makes you proud and arrogant, or fearful and insecure. It makes you enslaved.
2. If you hold to the teaching of Christ, you are free indeed. If it's about the work of Christ and not your work, there is nothing He can't ask of you.
3. What do you do to know Him better?
  - a. Are you in a small group drawing closer to Jesus and His people?
  - b. Do you read and study the word so you can gain an appreciation of what it means to know God?
  - c. When you pray, do you just ask Him for stuff, or do you give Him praise just for being who He is?
4. Have you made the great I AM the center not just of religion in your life, but of everything in your life? Do you ask the King creator and redeemer of the universe in as your helper? Or do you say command me?