

**John 8:48-59 (The Holy Trinity—Series C)**  
**“Jesus Christ is God and Savior”**  
**Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield CT**  
**June 12, 2022**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our text is the Gospel Reading from John 8:

<sup>48</sup>The Jews answered and said to Him, “Are we not right saying that you are a Samaritan and you have a demon?” <sup>49</sup>Jesus answered, “**I** do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and **you** dishonor Me. <sup>50</sup>But I do not seek my own glory, but there is One who seeks and judges. <sup>51</sup>Truly, truly I say to you, if anyone should keep my word, he shall surely not ever see death.” <sup>52</sup>Then the Jews said to Him, “Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets, but you say, ‘If anyone should keep my word, he shall surely not ever experience death?’ <sup>53</sup>You are not greater than our father Abraham who died, are you? And the prophets died. Who do you make yourself to be?” <sup>54</sup>Jesus answered, “If I should glorify Myself, My glory is nothing. My Father is the One who glorifies Me, whom you say, ‘He is our God.’ <sup>55</sup>And you do not know Him, but I know Him. And if I said that I do not know Him, I would be like you, a liar. But I do know Him and I keep His word. <sup>56</sup>Your father Abraham rejoiced that he should see My day, and he saw it and he was glad.” <sup>57</sup>Therefore the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham?” <sup>58</sup>Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I Am.” <sup>59</sup>Then they picked up stones to throw at Him. But Jesus was hidden and went out of the temple.

That there will be controversy in the Church on earth is to be expected. Jesus Himself warned His followers in the Gospels that “many false prophets will arise and lead many astray” (Matt. 24:11 ESV). The Apostle Peter wrote by the power of the Holy Spirit, “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them” (2 Pet. 2:1 ESV). And St. John offered this word through the Holy Spirit, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1 ESV). At times, the Church will be called upon to address various false beliefs and false teachings that creep into the lives of the believers.

If you looked at the church calendar, you noticed that not only is today Holy Trinity Sunday, but also the observance of the Ecumenical (or universal) Council of Nicaea. The first

Council of Nicaea met in the early summer of 325 at what is today Isnik, Turkey. The reason for the Council, among other items of business, was to deal with what is known as Arianism. Arius was a pastor in Alexandria, Egypt around 310 A.D. Arius said that Jesus Christ could not be God in the true sense of the term. Rather, Jesus must be a part of creation. Arius thought of Christ as a "middle being," less than God and more than man. He claimed that Christ was a created being, having either been created in time or before time. Nevertheless, Christ was not the preexistent, eternal Son of God, without beginning and end. The Council of Nicaea ruled against the Arians. The Council confessed the eternal divinity of the Son of God and adopted the earliest version of the Nicene Creed, which in its entirety was adopted at the Council of Constantinople in 381. What we confess as the Nicene Creed is this creed in its "final form" from the year 381 A.D.

The Arian controversy which the Council of Nicaea worked through in confessing the Biblical truth of Jesus' divinity was not a new controversy, however. We see the debate about Jesus in our Gospel text as Jesus and the Jews square off. Most often in the Gospel of John, the term, "the Jews," refers specifically to Jesus' opponents. So, it is those in opposition to Jesus—the scribes, Pharisees, and teachers of the Law—who do not believe His word and teachings.

In John 6, after the feeding of the 5000, when asked by the crowd, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent. . . . Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. . . .

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh" (John 6:28-29, 45–51 ESV).

But Jesus' opponents do not believe. They do not have saving faith in Jesus, the Son of the Father, who has come in human flesh to give His life for the salvation of the world. Before our text, Jesus said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.' So they said to him, 'Who are you?' Jesus said to them, 'Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.' They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father. So Jesus said to them, 'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me'" (John 8:23–28 ESV).

And the controversy continued to boil. Jesus would tell His enemies that they are of their father, the devil, and their will is to do his desires rather than God the Father's will. In other words, those who will not believe the words of Jesus as He points to the Father and the Father's desire to save all humanity through His Son trace their spiritual ancestry to the devil. "Whoever is of God hears the words of God," Jesus said. "The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God" (8:47).

So the Jews resorted to name calling, "Are we not right saying that you are a Samaritan and you have a demon?" And by doing so, they actually prove Jesus' point. "I do

not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and **you** dishonor Me. But I do not seek my own glory, but there is One who seeks and judges"—God the Father. Jesus' words are not even close to being the product of demon-possession. They are indeed the very words which God the Father has given Him to speak. It is just as Jesus said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30 ESV).

Now the words that Jesus speaks are words of spirit and life (John 6:63). They are words of "eternal life" (John 6:68). The message that Jesus brings delivers from eternal death those who hear and keep it (that is, to those who believe). And so Jesus said to His opponents, "Truly, truly I say to you, if anyone should keep my word, he shall surely not ever see death." This puts them over the top. What nonsense Jesus speaks! "Do you think that you are greater than our father Abraham who died, greater than the prophets who died? Who do you make yourself to be?"

"I AM WHO I AM." That's essentially what Jesus said in His statement, "Before Abraham was, I AM." Jesus is God the Son incarnate. Yahweh stands before the Jews in human flesh in the person of God the Son. And the meaning is not lost on the hearers. Jesus is to be stoned for His blasphemy. He must die because He claims to be God.

Notice, it is the same controversy dealt with at the Council of Nicaea some 300 years later. Is Jesus simply a man, is He more than a man but less than God? Or is Jesus who He said He is, who the Word of God states that He is, true God and true Man, one Christ? That is the Christian confession of the person of Jesus Christ. We will speak it shortly as we declare the truth of the Athanasian Creed: "Therefore, it is the right faith that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is at the same time both God and man. He is God,

begotten from the substance of the Father before all ages; and He is man, born from the substance of His mother in this age: perfect God and perfect man, composed of a rational soul and human flesh; equal to the Father with respect to His divinity, less than the Father with respect to His humanity. Although He is God and man, He is not two, but one Christ: . . . For as the rational soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ, who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead, ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence He will come to judge the living and the dead.”

Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, escaped the death of stoning that day as He “was hidden and went out of the temple.” But Satan’s hour would come, and the power of darkness would fall upon Jesus as He was arrested and crucified. Jesus saw death in all of its power and fullness. He tasted, He experienced, the forsakenness of that death for all humanity as He bore our sins in His body on the tree of the cross. Jesus experienced the terrors of the grave as He breathed His last and was buried in death. This was the will of His Father in heaven. This was the perfect work of salvation, the very reason that God the Son became incarnate, taking on human flesh, so that He might bear the sins of the world, die the world’s death, suffer the world’s hell and condemnation, and ultimately give death its moral wound by His resurrection.

Christ is Risen! (He is risen, indeed. Alleluia!) Jesus, true God and true Man, is risen from the dead, the firstfruits of all who sleep. His death and resurrection have dealt the deathblow to the enemy, death. Jesus has rendered death powerless to those who believe His Word—“he shall surely not ever see death.” Martin Luther in 1520 wrote in his *Fourteen*

*Consolations*, "In death we are like all other men: the outward mode of our dying is not unlike that of others, except the thing itself is different, since for us death is dead. In like manner, all our sufferings are like the sufferings of others, but only in appearance. In reality, our sufferings are the beginning of our freedom as our death is the beginning of life. It is this which Christ says in John 8 [:51], "Whoever will keep my word shall never see death." How shall he not see it? Because in his death he enters upon life, so that because of the life that he sees he is not able to see death. Here the night shines as the day [Ps. 139:12], since the dawning life is brighter than the waning death. This is assured . . . for all who believe in Christ."<sup>1</sup>

Eternal life is your present possession because you have received the forgiveness of sins through Jesus' blood and righteousness. In the hour when your soul and body are separated, your soul is immediately with Christ, for on that day your soul will be with Christ in Paradise. But on the great day when the Risen Lord Christ, true God and true Man, comes again in power and glory, your body will be raised from the dead and reunited with your soul. Death will meet its total defeat in the Resurrection. And you will rejoice and be glad in the day of the Lord Jesus when you enter with Him into the new creation along side Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the people who trusted in the Lord's Gospel promises which are completed in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Son of Man, our Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 42: Devotional Writings I*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 42 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 142–143.

I realize that this has been more of a teaching sermon, a little more “heady,” if you will. What, then, does this all mean for us? Controversy is not new in the Church. There will always be those who deny that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, without error. There will be those who try to convince believers that Jesus is less than He claims to be—a mere man, a good teacher, a philosopher, as well as any number of other crazy things. False teachings and lies will creep into Christendom and seek to numb you to the truth of the Word of God and of the truth of the Word of God Made Flesh, Jesus Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Gospel and the Sacraments of Christ, you and I are able to remain faithful in our confession of the Triune God and of God the Son who is at the same time both fully God and fully Man. This Son of God, Jesus, is our Savior, who for the glory of God the Father suffered death, hell, and the grave so that you and all people might be saved from sin, death, hell, and the devil’s power. By faith, you do keep Christ’s Word and so by faith, you have received forgiveness of sins and everlasting life so that you will never experience eternal death and condemnation.

By the power and grace of God the Holy Spirit, remain steadfast in this Christian faith and confession, willing to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.