



Sunday, February 28, 2021

Rev. Dr. Michael R. Fitzgerald, Senior Pastor

Gospel of John Series, Sermon #32 “Living a Lie”

John 8:48-59 (King James Version)

Welcome! Jeff Thompson, a media “guru,” in our congregation today told me our weekly services are reaching into other nations of the world—primarily in Europe—and that our message is being heard! Isn’t that amazing?!! Praise God! If you had told me back in 1982 when I started preaching here that our little country church would be able to project a message into Europe, I would have laughed. We are so grateful for how the Gospel extends far beyond our community. As we begin today to study God’s word, we know He has something for you and me to hear and somehow to grow as His children. If you’ve never come to Jesus as Lord and Savior, listen carefully today. An invitation will be given at the end of the sermon so that anyone can come to Him.

We continue our study in the Gospel of John. The old disciple wrote about the life of Jesus Christ under God’s inspiration; however, he doesn’t write down every jot and tittle. At the end of the book he says if we were to write the entirety of Jesus’ life, the world could not contain the books. He writes mainly the “high water” marks so he can lead the world to Jesus, his Lord and Savior. John had come to Christ and wanted to give an account that could lead anyone to the living Lord Jesus. This Gospel is an accurate, concise record of all of Jesus’ life. What’s amazing in the Bible is that we see those sweet accounts of His life where He touches or heals someone, someone responds to His word or invitation, someone comes to Him as Savior, but we also see the challenges, heartaches, and enemies of Jesus. Primarily in John we see some of His enemies. In Chapter 8 we’ve been learning about those who hate Jesus Christ; John wants us to hear it as it is the Word of God. The Word of God is not in this book; the Word of God **is** this book! Every word is important and worthy of our study.

Let me give you a recap of where we’ve been in this chapter. Jesus forgives the adulterous woman who was dragged before Him to be stoned to death. The law of God said a person caught in the act of adultery is to be stoned—taking that evil, that cancer, out of the Nation of Israel. Yet, Jesus forgave her but there was still a death to atone for her sin. It was **His** death on the cross, not her death that called her into the Kingdom of God. Jesus told the crowd around Him and the woman “...let him without sin cast the first stone...” None of those men could cast a stone, so they fell to the ground. Jesus is left alone with the woman after the mob disperses and told her to “go and sin no more.” If you know Jesus as your Savior, it will change your life, your thoughts, and lifestyle. Now the crowd comes back to Jesus—some who believed Him, some doubters, others hated Him so much they were devising a plan to kill Him. The latter group was composed of religious leaders of Israel—scribes and Pharisees. They hated Jesus because He revealed them as fakes and phonies; they taught the Word, wore the robes but they didn’t know the God of the Word. He said your heart doesn’t belong to the Father; you’re lost and hell-bound. He assures the people He is the Lord, that He came from God to speak the truth. In John 8:28 He alludes to His own crucifixion “When I am lifted up, you will realize I am God.” The Jews and the religious leaders hated His truthfulness. They said to Him we don’t need you; we’re free through father Abraham (he was the beginning of the Jewish lineage). These scribes and Pharisees say we’re part of the favored Nation of Israel; therefore, God sees us as forgiven, His own children. Jesus nails down the raw truth and says to them Abraham, the righteous man, was a friend and servant of God. He loved the Lord with all his heart, but he’s not your father. I’ll tell you who your father is—John 8:44 **“Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth because**

there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” Jesus tells them they’re lost and filled with the lies of Satan. You reject the truth of God, and the truth of God is standing right here with you. The hatred of these men deepens. Let’s finish the chapter.

“⁴⁸Then answered the Jews and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil? ⁴⁹Jesus answered, **I have not a devil; but I honor my Father, and ye do dishonor me.** ⁵⁰**And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.** ⁵¹**Verily, verily, I say unto you. If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.** ⁵²Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying he shall never taste of death. ⁵³Art thou greater than our father Abraham which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? ⁵⁴Jesus answered, **If I honor myself, my honor is nothing: it is my Father that honoreth me; of whom ye say that he is your God.** ⁵⁵**Yet ye have not known him, but I know him; and if I should say I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him and keep his saying.** ⁵⁶**Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad.** ⁵⁷Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? ⁵⁸Jesus said unto them, **Verily, verily, I say unto you Before Abraham was, I am.** ⁵⁹Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.”

As we look at this conversation and God blesses the Word, the Pharisees absolutely do not believe Jesus. He’s been called, sent by God, and represents the very truth and Word of God, but they want to smear His reputation and make him a liar. Read verse 48. This attempts to assassinate Jesus’ character in two ways: They say to Him (1) You’re not fully a Jew; we suspect you have some Samaritan blood in you. (2) We believe you’re not of God; we believe you have a devil living in you. Why did they accuse Jesus of being a Samaritan? They’re really asking who is your father. We know your history, about your mother carrying a child out of wedlock. We know Joseph became your earthly father; married your mother, Mary, but who is really your earthly father? We suspect it’s a no-good Samaritan—this is one of the cruelest insults that could be leveled against a Jewish man and against the character of Jesus the Christ. Notice Jesus never replies; it’s below His dignity to respond to such an insult. He said I don’t have a devil in me; what I do totally honors God the Father. You scribes and Pharisees attempt to shame me but He says I’m not here for my own glory or to accumulate fame or riches for myself. I’m here to honor the Father and do His will and give **Him** the glory. He points out His earthly life won’t end in glory; it will end in the shame of a cross in order to atone for you and me—sinners alike. The perfect Lamb, the perfect Son of God gave Himself to a cross that you and I might be forgiven. He died a sinner’s death for that adulterous woman; for Pastor Mike Fitzgerald; for you; for each of us! His last cry from that cross was of victory that He had finished the battle and paid the debt for every sinner when He said “It is finished.” He’s saying salvation’s debt has been paid.

Read verse 51. Jesus is telling the men who hate Him the most on earth how to be saved. He’s giving the Gospel, the good news, the truth, how they can be saved. He says whoever keeps My word will never see, experience, or taste death. As I said in the early service, this past week we sent one of our saint’s home, Eunice Stevens, who was 97 years old. She was a godly woman, and although we had a funeral for her, she never died. She simply transitioned from this old earth to home—an address that will never change. It’s true for every one of us who accept and live in the word Jesus teaches us. Jesus gives that promise to the greatest atheist in the world. Anyone can know Him as Lord and Savior and make that turn in life and accept His word, promise, and truth. But the Pharisees say now we know you’re full of the devil! We know you’re a liar because you say if

you keep the Word of God you will not die. They even quote Jesus in verse 52. Here's their logic in calling Him a liar: The Pharisees say father Abraham was one of the greatest men who ever walked the face of the earth. He was a godly, righteous man and he died. The very prophets who wrote the Word of God died—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Moses. So how can you say those who know the word will never die? They'll hear these words of Jesus but not hear what He's saying to them that that person will have eternal life and will transition to a home in heaven. He tells them all of your teaching is hollow; your fancy robes and honor in the streets is all based on a lie. You open the Bible and supposedly teach the Word of God but you don't even know the Lord. How sad—you're strangers to God.

The tables will turn one day. We're strangers to God when we don't know Him. He says one day you'll stand before Me, and the Lord Himself will say "I never knew you. You're a stranger to Me; you never came to Me. You never put your life in My hands." I have a poem on a file cabinet in my office that says:

As you pass this little church, please stop in for a visit.

So when they finally carry you in, God won't say who is it?

We don't want to be strangers to God. We want the Lord to know us, and we want to know Him. Within the humor of that little poem, we want a relationship with Him and He wants a relationship with us. We want that recognition, that salvation, that walk with Him.

Can you imagine the tension building between Jesus and these men? They simply will not hear Him, follow Him, won't accept His invitation to life. Jesus is not holding the truth back. Why? Because these men are in trouble! They're one heartbeat away from hell. All of their identities and status won't save them. Jesus lays all the cards on the table hoping they'll turn to Him, but they never do. They look the part, say the right words but they're as lost as they can be. They become angry with the truth instead of accepting it. Read verses 56-58. Verse 58 is amazing; Jesus says I have a connection with your father Abraham. At this point in time when Jesus is speaking to these religious leaders, Abraham lived two thousand years ago. Jesus tells them I know all about him; in fact, I know Abraham personally. I walked with him, spoke to him—these men are freaked out by that! How could you know him when you're not yet fifty years old? If you remember, God the Father told Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3 that if you follow Me you may not know everywhere I'm leading you and I might not give you the road map to tell you exactly where we'll end up, but I will always lead you in the right direction. You just follow Me in faith, and you'll end up in the right place and this is the covenant and promise I make to you. If you follow me, Abraham, I will take your family and will bless you, your family, and all the generations to come. You will become a blessing to all the families in the world. Jesus stands before these religious men and says I am that blessing God made as a promise to Abraham. Through his family salvation can come to the world through My cross. Jesus is explaining the truth to them, and they just can't believe it. He makes this huge statement—when He says before Abraham lived, I Am. In Exodus 3:14 we learn that's the name of Almighty God that He gives to Moses when Moses says when I go to the people of Israel and they ask what is God's name. God says tell them my name is "I AM THAT I AM." To shorten, it's "I Am, Yahweh," the beginning, the middle and the end; there is no beginning and no end. Jesus says to these men before Abraham was, he used God Almighty's name and said I Am. He told them in that moment I am God standing with you now.

I want you to understand what we believe the Bible tells us about Jesus. There are many faiths and religions in the world that point out Jesus was a good man; He came from God and was a prophet of God. That's **not** what we believe! We believe by the Word of God that **Jesus Is God**. He tells us that literally in verse 58.

What happens when Jesus identifies Himself as God? Do the scribes and Pharisees fall on their knees and worship Him? No. Maybe they fall on their knees to pick up rocks to stone Him, call Him a liar, bring about His death because they simply will not believe Him. Remember, Jesus is living on God's timetable. He was going to die on the cross in just a few days; this was not the moment or mode of His death. So God gave Him the direction and power to walk through the crowd, out of the temple and out of danger because Scripture says it wasn't His time to die. This is where Scripture ends today. How utterly sad—because these men would not believe Jesus and come to Him as Savior. John is compelled by the Spirit of God to tell us that. It's the truth of God revealed to us; we have to know it and study it. In Matthew and Luke, Jesus describes hell as a place of gnashing of teeth. The Greek word for gnashing is "brugmos" which basically means you grind your teeth in pain and utter regret for a mistake you've made. Jesus tells these men you're not going to be saved. They'll end up in that place where they'll eternally regret the Son of God stood right in their midst, and they wanted to stone Him. Forever and ever, they'll gnash their teeth—how sad to be offered forgiveness and turn it down.

The world is full of people who may speak the name of Jesus—some flippantly, some using curse words. Some good, law abiding folk use His name; some may sit in church services. But life is hollow—they may say His name, sing hymns, hear sermons but there's no trust or love for Him in their heart. There's no communication with Him, no walk with Him—it's all in word but not in truth. Satan can use that façade of being religious that we use the name of Jesus. But one day we'll stand before God, and He'll say I never knew you because you never really wanted to know Me. You never came to Me at My invitation to be My son or daughter. Over and over, I asked you to come. I showed you My love, showed Myself to you in the very nature you walked in but still You didn't come. The Pharisees pretended to love God and thought they had a relationship but it was fake.

Today, no matter who you are don't be the one who just goes through the motions, the one who mentions His name but has no relationship. He wants us to be connected with Him in love and feel it poured upon us. Do you truly love Him as your Lord? Do you tell Him you love Him? Down deep, I believe God Almighty confirms in us if we really know Him or not. What's He telling you right now? To know Jesus is to give Him all we have. We'd be willing to leave all our material possessions, fame, and fortune rather than lose Jesus. We surrender all to Him. Believers, I pray we'll reconfirm and recommit our life to Him and say "Lord Jesus, I will surrender all for You even if it comes to laying down my life. I want to walk with You, love You, have You be my Lord and Savior and friend." Wherever you are right now, recommit your life to surrendering all to the Savior Jesus because life is all about Him. In John 15, He tells us you have to abide in Me to be productive.

If you've never received Him as your Savior, you have to hear His word of invitation. Lay everything down—that amazing weight of sin and guilt you carry on your shoulders. You can remove all that and lay it at the feet of the cross of Jesus. The Bible says you lay that sin down before the Savior, and He will forgive you and will take it away. If you need Him, today is the day to come to Him. Share this message with a friend who needs Him. He's willing to take your burdens and take you as His son or daughter.

Let Us Pray: Father God, these are hard words. Yet I know the old disciple John, under the inspiration of God, wrote them down this way because the world still needs to hear that there are people still living a fake relationship with Jesus—living a lie. I pray for those hearing the message today to open their hearts and lives to a true relationship, walking with You, talking with You, following you, and believing Your truth. Jesus told us until we abide in Him, we can't be productive in anything else in our life. Help us, Father, as Your sons and daughters to seek that relationship with You that honors You. Bless that one who needs You; today he or she can say yes. They don't have to wait to get better; the Bible says it's a true decision of faith. They can lay down their sin and guilt, and You will forgive them. "Go, and sin no more." In Jesus' name. Amen.