

Judica

21 March, Anno Domini 2021

St. John 8:46-59

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

"Are we not right when we say that you are a filthy, godless, sinful Samaritan and that your mouth is filled with the vile poisonous teaching of demons?" The Jews had nothing. They couldn't really answer Jesus' question. As hard as they tried, as many traps as they tried to set, they couldn't convict Jesus of any sins of life. He hadn't done anything contrary to the Divine Law. He kept every commandment perfectly as He walked about healing those afflicted by demons and illnesses of mind and body (even and especially on the Sabbath), as He sat and feasted at the tables of some of the most despicable and hated people of society, as He submitted to the authorities set over Him as a child and a citizen even when they abused Him and themselves acted contrary to God's Word. Not a single sin of thought, word, or deed.

But that wasn't what really bothered the Jews. It wasn't that Jesus was morally upright in every way imaginable (after all, they thought pretty highly of themselves). Even today, everybody loves to talk about how good and loving Jesus was. But what really got to them, what enraged them to the point of murder, was Jesus' doctrine. Jesus' preaching drove them to near insanity because it was a preaching against all of their most cherished idols. It was a preaching against their own righteousness. It was a preaching against their own made-up sense of morality and goodness. It was a preaching that held forth God's mercy for sinners and God's judgment against those who thought that they were above repentance. It was a preaching against their rejection of the very Scriptures that they claimed saved them, the Word that was standing in front of them in the flesh, the Word that they were ready to stone in their blind rage.

They were not of God and so they couldn't hear the Word of God. Yes, they had wonderful titles. They had grown up all their lives reading the Word God spoke through His holy prophets of old. They could trace their blood lines back to father Abraham. They went to the temple. They prayed. They fasted. But they were not of God. They were deaf to what they read. They were liars. Wait a second! They were good Jews! Who was Jesus to call into question their motives and their salvation? Who was He to tell them that they weren't of God? How dare He be so presumptuous! How dare He tell them that their worship of God according to their

own heart was demonic. There is nothing more unyielding or fiercely self-defensive than unbelief when it's cornered.

How often have you picked up stones to throw against Jesus? How often have you balked at His preaching and instead of listening ,tried to silence Him? We love the Jesus who loves and heals. We love the Jesus who feeds us and gives us things. But we do not like the Jesus who claims that there is no salvation apart from Him. With the deepest hatred, our Old Adam loathes the Jesus who calls us to repent of our arrogant self- righteousness or our own self-defined Christianity. Being a religious or spiritual person means nothing. Being a morally upstanding person means nothing. Jesus will not be seen or had by those who will not receive Him in humble repentance. He hides Himself in weakness and in death to silence all who put their trust in their strength, their faith, their wisdom, or their righteousness. He hides Himself from those who think that God is impressed with how good they are, how hard they've tried, or how loudly they claim that God is important to them. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."

Jesus didn't come to affirm you or make you feel better about yourself - He came to die for you. He came to die for the lies you tell God, yourself, and others; for your abuse of your neighbor; for your pride and vanity; for your broken promises; for your love of self and worldly favor rather than love and fear of God. The One who was before Abraham knows your heart, knows the secrets you keep, and the masks you wear and He loves you enough to pay the full price for all of it. And no matter how we kick and scream and try to claim otherwise, we need the Son of God to hang from the cross dripping with the blood of our guilt and rejected by His heavenly Father because daily we sin much. Jesus and His Church do the most loving thing when they expose false teaching and misplaced faith because only the one, true faith in the one, true Savior saves. If Jesus doesn't die for our sin, we have to. There is simply no other means of salvation. To unbelief the cross is embarrassing and over-the-top. To unbelief, the forgiveness of sins is old and boring, passé. To unbelief, repentance is something only for those sinful people. To unbelief, Jesus is offensive because Jesus means that we are poor miserable sinners.

But that is exactly who Jesus came for. If you aren't a sinner then Jesus has nothing for you. But if you are a sinner, if you have known the guilt and sorrow of doing the very things that you hate because you know God hates them, if you see in the cross the wisdom and love of God slaying His spotless Son for your sin, if your battle-wearied soul never tires of hearing the promise of your salvation, then

rest assured - you are from God. The Holy Spirit given to you on the day of your Baptism is fighting against your flesh and daily bringing forth a new man who lives in righteousness and purity forever, a new man who lives not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit, a new man not by virtue of his own holiness but a new man by virtue of the righteousness of Jesus. To be sure, the Old Adam will daily try to pick up more stones to hurl at Christ, your flesh will long to crucify Him again by leading you to indulge your selfish desires. But your Savior has already won the victory for you. He doesn't hold your sins against you. He pardons them, hiding them in the marks from the thorns, the nails, and the spear. He covers them in His blood so that you might be vindicated in the eyes of the Father who no longer sees your sin, but the sacrifice of His beloved Son on your behalf.

And being from God you have come here to the altar of God where He speaks the most precious Words the child of God, still wrestling with the weakness and brokenness of his flesh, can hear "Take, eat; take drink; this is My Body and Blood, given and shed, FOR YOU for the forgiveness of your sins." These are words that bring life and healing. These are the words of Jesus that if you keep, if you cling to place all your confidence and trust in you will never taste death, like your father Abraham and like the prophets and like all the saints who died before you in this one true faith, in this One true Savior who proclaims the Word of life.

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God. For He has died and now lives and so shall I and I will again praise Him, my salvation and my God.

In the Name of +Jesus.