

No Peace on Earth

(John 8:48-59)

(preached 12/16/18; Pine Grove BC Sun AM)

Introduction

Take your Bible and turn with me to John 8:48...

Let me read the passage before us this morning..

48 The Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?”

49 Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. 50 But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges.

51 Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death.” 52 The Jews said to Him,

“Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.’ 53 Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died?

The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out

to be?” 54 Jesus answered, “If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God’; 55 and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced [p]to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” 57 So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years

old, and have You seen Abraham?” 58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham [q]was born, I am.” 59 Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus [r]hid Himself and went out of the temple.

Let us pray.

As we come to Christmas season, nativity scenes pop up all over the place.

Though we dont have one for our yard, we do a Little People Nativity Scene that our kids used to play with during this time of the year.

And the reason nativity scenes are popular is that they are reminders of what Christmas is about.

A young father and mother in a stable with their baby being born in a feeding trough surrounded farm animals under the stars of Bethlehem..

For many nativity scenes go right along with the idea of a peaceful Christmas..

What we fail to realize is that Bethlehem probably wasn't that quiet and peaceful on the night of Jesus' birth..

With all the people in that little town for the census, it was more than likely a little chaotic.

However our eyes see the nativity scene, and our thoughts turn peaceful..

Then you have songs like Silent Night that further this notion of peace at Christmas...

Sleep in heavenly peace..

Then you even the world longing for peace on earth at Christmas time..

And look I get it.

Our hearts long for a time of peace in a stressful world.

But I want you all to know that that the birth of Jesus is not a picture of peace..

In fact, I want you to listen to Jesus' description of why he came into the world..

Matthew 10:32-39

32 “Therefore everyone who [z]confesses Me before men, I will also confess [aa]him before My Father who is in heaven. 33 But whoever [ab]denies Me before

men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

34 “Do not think that I came to [ac]bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

35 For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; 36 and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household.

37 “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

39 He who has found his [ad]life will lose it, and he who has lost his [ae]life for My sake will find it.

The irony of Christmas is that people like to view it as a season of peace on earth, yet Jesus is clear..

His coming into the world at Christmas was not to bring peace..

His coming into the world at Christmas was to bring division..

And the reason it brought division is because Jesus brought light into a dark world.

He brought truth in a world of lies.

He brought true worship of God into a world filled with false worship.

Though we gather around at Christmas and eat and visit and exchange presents, there is nothing peaceful about that manger scene.

“Sleep in heavenly peace” may make for a good chorus at Christmas, but Jesus’ birth had actually led to a lot of restless nights for people divided over the truth..

Now I am not trying to kill the Christmas spirit in your heart...

And I know that “Peace on Earth” looks better on a Christmas ornament than “Division on Earth..”

But I also want you to know that the baby in the manger is the great dividing line of all of human history..

Not only does Jesus divide families and friends and co-workers, Jesus divides true and false religion..

You see all true religion, all true worship goes through Christ.

While all false religion and false worship opposes Christ..

Nowhere is this more evident than in the gospel of John.

As the baby in the manger became the preacher in the streets, the opposition to Him only grew..

Yet, the hardest attack and the deepest opposition to Christ was not from the Jewish people, it was from the Jewish religious leaders..

Men who were supposed to represent God actually attacked the son of God.

Men who were seen as peacekeepers actually became men who actively waged war on Christ..

But how does Christ respond to these attacks?

Well, last week, he responded with truth..

He told them that their family heritage was not a guarantee of heaven..

He told them that their knowledge of God was no guarantee that they knew God in a saving way..

And he told them that their life of lies prevented them from hearing the truth..

While this may seem harsh and unloving, it is not.

It is simply an act of mercy to awaken these men from their unbelief..

Well, they don't wake up.

In fact, they attack all the more...

Last week, they said that Jesus was the product of Mary's immorality..

This week, they go after Jesus on a more personal level and even on a physical level..

But though it all, Christ keeps his focus and maintains the peace..

And this will be the focus for us as well..

How do we live peaceful in a world of war that wages on the believer?

How do we respond to attacks that come our way?

Well, let's watch and learn from Christ..

In verses 48-51, we will discover...

I. Keep the Peace by Inviting Others (48-51)

Back in verse 48, the Jews are still in shock from the accurate accusation that they are sons of the devil..

But they respond to Jesus with the worst insult you could offer a Jewish man by calling him a demon-possessed Samaritan.

As most of you know, Samaria was the central region of Israel but most Jews in the north and in the south didn't consider Samaritans to be true Jews..

The reason for that view is that the Samaritans were the descendants of Jewish marriages to unbelievers who settled there after the northern kingdom was carried off in captivity by the Assyrians in 722 BC..

As a result, Samaritans were often seen as a mixed race of Jewish and Gentile origin.

They were therefore hated by the southern Jews in Judea and the northern Jews Galilee, who even avoided walking through the area..

As a result, calling someone a Samaritan was a great insult to a Jew..

However to add to that physical insult, they added a spiritual insult to Christ by saying that he was possessed by a demon..

Now this is the height of insults to say that the son of God is now under demonic influence..

This is blasphemy of the highest order, yet Christ never loses his composure..

Verse 49..

49 Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. 50 But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges.

In the face of incredible insults, Jesus simply denies their claims and says that that they call him whatever they like since he is not concerned with protecting his honor..

Though Jesus is fully God, he came to earth to do the work of the Father.

He covered his glory in human flesh so that He could he keep the law, resist all sin, and be our sacrifice for sin.

As a result, his earthly ministry was not about his exaltation but about his humiliation..

And look, people can say what they want about me.

It may hurt but in the end, I move on because this life is not about me.

It's not about protecting my honor or my name.

My life is about promoting the name of Christ.

When the Jews hurled insults at Christ, he kept his composure because he knew that his first coming was not about protecting his honor...

In fact, his humiliation and his persecution on the cross become our salvation..

But not only does Christ keep the peace here by showing perfect self control here, he goes a step further..

He also keeps the peace by offering eternal life to his persecutors..

Verse 51..

51 Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death."

I mean this is unheard of composure and compassion..

They insult, but Jesus invites them to eternal life.

They persecute, but Jesus promises them eternal.

They attack, but Jesus asks them to believe in Him.

This is the model for responding to insult in your life.

When the attackers come, tell them the truth and invite them to believe in Christ.

Let's move to verse 52....

II. Keep the Peace by Relating to Others (52-56)

52 The Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.’ 53 Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?”

There are times in our life when we expect the troubles and insults to stop.

We have prayed for that person.

We have shown patience with that person.

We have not returned evil for evil with that person.

In the face of their wrath, we have responded with a gentle answer..

Yet, the insults keep coming.

What are we to do the supposed “Bible formulas” don’t work?

Well, we are about to find out because Jesus is now in that exact situation..

They have hurled their insults.

He has reasoned with kindness and grace, but they keep coming at him.

Now in verses 52 and 53, they are attacking his mental stability.

How can he promise to give eternal life when Abraham and the prophets couldn't make that same promise?

In their minds, who is Jesus to promise something that the greatest Jews of all time couldn't do?

Their comment is actually attacking Jesus' mental stability..

Now look, we have all been there.

People insult and we reposed graciously.

And our expectation is that they will retreat and get nicer..

But what happens when the insults keep coming?

Is it okay to lose our cool when we do what's right but it doesn't work?

And the answer is clearly no.

In the face of increasing insults, we simply increase our commitment to sharing the truth with them..

Let's look at Jesus' response to this second assault in verse 54..

54 Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God'; 55 and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word.

Notice once again that Jesus simply responds to an insult with the truth.

And the truth is that Christ has the power to give eternal life because He is one with the Father..

Sadly, the Jews were not one with God.

In fact, they didn't even know God.

And how ironic is that.

The people on earth who claimed to have exclusive rights to God were actually on the outside looking in.

The men who claimed to know the God of the Scriptures didn't even recognize the Son of God.

And if you don't honor the Son, you don't honor the Father.

Once again, Jesus is simply responding to persecution with the truth.

Look, when someone is insulting you on a personal level, it is so tempting to respond with a personal insult of your own.

Little kids are the model for this..

You're ugly.

Well, so are you.

You smell.

Well, so do you.

Christ is the model of how to rise above personal insults and simply share the truth in a a loving way.

Now look, it may not seem loving to call someone a liar like Jesus does at the end of verse 54, but it is.

Love points out the truth and urges people to respond to the truth.

These men knew they were liars.

They may not have considered themselves wrong about the nature of who Christ was, but everyone lies.

And that truth should be enough to lead people to a Savior..

IT doesn't matter what a person lies about, it only matters that the lie separates them from a truthful God.

Evangelism requires us to confront the sins of others.

Sinners must be alerted to their sin if they ever hope to come to Christ.

Calling these men liars is true but it is also an act of love designed to alert them to their need of forgiveness..

But then we also see this in verse 56..

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced [p]to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."

Now how are we to understand this?

Abraham has been dead nearly 2000 years by the time of Christ, so how did he see Jesus' day?

Well, Abraham saw Christ's day in the birth of his son Isaac..

Abraham saw the day of Christ as his family grew and expanded over his lifetime.

Abraham never literally saw a nation of millions of his descendants in a land of their own, but he looked forward to that reality due to his faith in the Lord.

Today, none of you have been to heaven, yet you toward that truth because of your faith in Christ..

You look forward to that Promised Land and you rejoice and are glad just like Abraham was in his lifetime..

Now why does Jesus make this comment to these Jews who are insulting him?

Simple.

Christ is trying to establish a relationship with them.

They know Abraham and so do He.

This is common ground for both Jesus and these religious leaders..

Though you can't always find common ground with folks attacking you, it helps the situation if you can.

It often softens their hard edge to you.

One thing I often use in trying to call people to salvation is to speak of what I was like before I came to Christ..

To mention my struggles..

To speak of the things that bothered me.

Now, I don't want to make it a conversation that highlights my sin, but I do want to be relatable to the people I am talking to.

Believers are no different than the people we are speaking to, we have just recognized our sin and found the solution to it..

As attacks come, be patient, speak the truth, find common ground, and invite them to Christ..

A third and final way to respond to sinner who attack you is found in verses 57-59..

WE will call this..

III. Keep the Peace by Departing from Others (57-59)

Verse 57..

57 So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”

This is really a ridiculous question.

These men knew that Abraham had died centuries earlier..

This is sarcasm at its finest.

This is insult at its lowest because this is insult that not only scorns but laughs as well.

This is mockery at its lowest level.

This is an insult with a laugh.

Yet Jesus does lose his composure or focus.

For the third time, he responds to insult with truth.

And this time, as the insults sink to the lowest levels, Christ responds with truth of the highest level.

Verse 58..

58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham [q]was born, I am.”

While those that tiny phrase of “I am” is uttered by us nearly every day in the English language as we describe ourselves..

I am tall.

I am hungry.

I am sad.

That phrase sent shivers up the spines of every Jewish person there.

“I am” was Gods’ personal name.

It was the name that God told Moses to call him in the burning bush..

If you have ever heard God called Yahweh, that is essentially God’s name in Hebrew.

God is the great I AM.

And the reason that is God’s name is because He has always existed..

God is eternal.

He always is in existence.

Therefore, he identified Himself to Moses as the great I AM.

And every Jew respected that name for God and never used it.

But here is Christ in the temple talking to these Jews who are insulting him, and when they ask how does he know Abraham, he simply says that he existed in the days of Abraham and even before..

In this verse, it is the great reality that Jesus is God.

And I will simply let you imagine how this went over in that crowd on this day..

The insulting, the questioning of his sanity, and now everyone is probably laughing about how Jesus knew Abraham...

But when Jesus responds with, “before Abraham was born, I am,” the laughing stops.

Mouths fly wide open.

People stand still.

But eventually that gives way to rage among the Jews..

Verse 59..

***59 Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him,
but Jesus [r]hid Himself and went out of the temple.***

This exchange between Jesus and the Jewish leaders that began way back at the beginning of this chapter is no over, and it ends with attempted murder.

This is how far hard hearted unbelievers will go in order to stay in their sin.

They will try to kill anyone who tries to call out their sin.

Now granted, the Jews were trying to stone him for blasphemy..

But how ironic that they are about to kill God in an attempt to defend his name.

But this is where unbelief always ends up.

It is not peaceful.

It is violent, and it won't stop until it attempts to eliminate God..

But for our benefit, notice the reaction of Christ.

Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple..

Now we can't supernaturally hide when attacks continue, but we can leave.

And sometimes, probably most of the time, it wiser to leave than continue.

Yes, there are people who were killed for their allegiance to the truth, but if God provides an escape take it.

Jesus is no coward.

He is simply leaving to fight another day.

Conclusion

So what can we pull from this into our lives today?

#1 - Answer a tirade with the truth.

Your purpose as a believer is not to win every argument.

Your purpose as a believer is not to get in the last word.

Your purpose as a believer is get the truth into the world.

Personal attacks tempt us to cover ourselves.

But may God help us to use attacks as a way to uncover the truth to those attacking.

Resist the urge to lower yourself to their level.

Instead, use the opportunity to elevate the truth of God.

#2 - See your enemy as your mission field.

This may be the hardest part of all when attacked, but the one attacking you is the one who needs Christ.

This is one of my biggest disappointments with believers who get so involved in politics.

Instead of seeing their political opponents as the mission field, they see them as people that need to be destroyed.

Look, I want God's justice to prevail in our society but more than that, I want to see people come to know Christ..

Jesus stood before these men who hated and were ready to kill him...

Yet, he took their insults and continued to invite them to come to Him..

#3 - Come to Christ before He leaves you.

These hard-hard-hearted men probably rejoiced as Christ departed the temple that day.

They probably shared a few high fives and pats on the back as they had chased Jesus out of their space..

But what a tragic picture..

When the Savior departs, men are in trouble..

But the real tragedy is that they have no clue that they just chased their only source of hope out of their presence..

Some of you may leave here today and never hear the truth again..

Some of you may leave today and never think of Jesus again..

There comes a day for every unbeliever when Jesus leaves them.

I pray that this isn't that day for any of you.

Today is the day to come to Christ.

He is the great I AM.

He is God in the flesh come to say guilty sinners like the liars in this passage and the people in these chairs and the preachers in this pulpit.

But you must repent of your sins and put your faith in Him.

You aren't saved by running Christ off.

You aren't saved by running from Christ.

You are saved by running to Christ in faith and repentance..

Let us pray.