

Honoring the Father and His Word

Trinity Sunday (Confirmation Sun.) – 06/15/25

Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church

Text: John 8:48-59 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 49, [Jesus answers the Jews,] **“I do not have a demon, but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.”**

v. 54b, He continues, **“It is My Father who glorifies Me.”**

Introduction

✖ So, how many fathers do you have? The obvious, instinctive answer for all of us is “One, of course.” Our biological father – he’s the one that we honor today on Father’s Day. He’s the one that we call if aren’t able to be with him in person; the one we might give a gift to; the one that we at least say, “Happy Father’s Day” to today. And that’s about as far as Father’s Day goes.

➔ But if that’s the extent of our understanding of fatherhood, then why do we talk about those who are our grandfathers; our great-grandfathers and our step-fathers? Why do we talk about the “city fathers” which is a common reference to the city council or the city leadership?

➔ Why do we use the term “father” when we say that Galileo was the “father of modern science” or René Descartes – the one who said, “I think, therefore I am” was the father of philosophy or that Karl Benz (from Mercedes Benz) was the father of modern transportation since he invented the practical automobile?

I. Jesus and the Jews

✖ In our Gospel Reading today, Jesus challenged the entire concept of fatherhood in the minds of the Jewish religious leaders.

➔ You see, the exchange that I read earlier, that begins with John 8:48 is a conversation that has already been going on for a while between Jesus and the Jews. Some of them actually believed in Jesus and to those believing Jews Jesus points to the only dependable; the only unchanging source for truth – God’s Holy Word in Scripture. He said in John 8:31-32, “If you abide (that is live) in My word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

✖ Well, that really upset the Jews who believed Jesus was nothing more than a common man, because they based their understanding of freedom on their blood lineage to Abraham. He’s the one that they said was the “father of their faith”. They said in verse 33, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone.”

➔ You see, they were totally ignoring the fact that their ancestors had been slaves in Egypt to Pharaoh and Babylon to King Nebuchadnezzar and they focused on Abraham instead of Yahweh God for their salvation, something Abraham would have absolutely abhorred.

➔ Well, that’s when Jesus totally rocked their understanding and uncovered their true sinful intentions. In verses 37-38 He said, “I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill Me because My word finds no place in you. I speak of what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.” Right there Jesus calls those guys out – saying point blank, “You and I don’t have the same Father; the same god.”

✖ How come? because it all comes down to this: “Who are you honoring with your words and actions?” “Who are you following?” “Who are you putting first in your life?”

- Isaiah, Jared and Jeffrey, you understand this now that you have studied the Ten Commandments, right? The First Commandment says what, ... “You shall have no other gods.” And whatever/whoever you honor or follow above everything else; that is your god!
- So, when the Fourth Commandment says, “Honor your father and your mother” does that mean that we are to honor our parents and earthly authorities before God? Of course not. No human being ever undoes the First Commandment.
- ✘ Today on Trinity Sunday, we are highlighting the Scriptural truth that the One true God has revealed Himself to us as a Three-in-One God. And the first person in the Triune God is God, the Father.
- Paul says in 1 Cor. 8:6, “...for us there is one God, the Father, *from* whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, *through* whom are all things and through whom we exist.”
- ✘ But those unbelieving Jews were not willing to acknowledge the Triune God. They refused to see Jesus as the promised Son of the Father in the flesh. They rooted their entire belief and salvation in their lineage to Abraham. To them, He was the “father of their faith”.
- But Jeffrey, Jared and Isaiah, you and I know from the Bible that Abraham is not how we are saved, right? In fact, how is it that you and I are saved? By grace through faith in Jesus Christ and not by our works, that’s right.
- ✘ So Jesus had to set these people straight – not to be mean, but because He was truly concerned about their salvation. So He told them in John 8:42-44 who their real Father is. He “said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of My own accord, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear My word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.’”
- Whoa, that’s pretty intense, isn’t it? Do you think Jesus takes things too far, when He tells them that just because they don’t believe in and follow Him, that they are following the devil? Well, this is Jesus. He is the one that tells us in Luke 11:23, “Whoever is not with Me is against Me.”
- So Jesus declares here the sad truth about fatherhood; the truth that still applies to many people whom we still know today. And what is that truth?
- 1) Those who honor or follow their earthly “fathers” or heroes like Abraham or any other earthly desires before God the Father are bottom line, honoring their real “father”, the devil. And,
 - 2) Those who believe that they are the ones who determine what is true; what is right; what should dictate their life’s priorities instead of the Triune God’s Word in Scripture, they are also honoring the devil and his lies, which are the world’s lies; which are the lies of our own sinful nature too.
- ✘ That means, according to Jesus – not me; not the church or anyone else, according to Jesus, there’s only two options for spiritual “fathers.”

II. Honoring the Father of Lies

- ✘ That’s why, Isaiah, Jared and Jeffrey, you are making such important vows today. You are confirming before the Triune God, and this, your Christian family, who it is that you honor as your Father first.

- ➔ In the verse just before our Gospel Reading Jesus told the Jews, “Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God” (Jn. 8:47). And so in verse 48, those Jews told Jesus, “You have a demon.”
- ✘ Well, today, you three confirmands are publicly taking your faith to a new level of commitment. Some people might say that you’re crazy to make the vows that you’re making today. Some might even look at those promises your making and say that you’re now a “religious fanatic” or a “Jesus freak”.
- ➔ In fact, the majority of our world today believes that you can actually be “too extreme in your faith.” They put us committed Christians down by saying that we are “obsessed with Jesus and His Word” – as if that’s a bad thing.
- ➔ Yet Jeffrey, isn’t that what the verse you chose for your Confirmation Verse says. Psalm 37:5, “Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him and He will act.” Some people, just like the Jews before Jesus, will say that “committing your life to the LORD” like that means that you should be committed to a mental ward. That’s no different than the Jews who said that Jesus had a demon (v.48).
- ✘ The real problem though, is not with you or me when we commit our lives to our heavenly Father first. It is with those unbelievers who just can’t let go of trying to be their own god and let the Bible – God’s Word, be what determines the truth and all that is important in life.
- ➔ In verse 51, Jesus says that it’s this simple, “Truly, truly, I say to you...”. Now, when Jesus starts like that, it’s like He’s saying, “Hey, wake up; pay attention. This is very important. What I’m about to say to you must be understood as the highest of priorities in your life and faith.” Jesus says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word, he will never see death.”
- ➔ Now how can anyone hear that promise from Jesus and still say that “the Bible; that Bible Study and learning God’s Word are not important?”
- ✘ But the Jews, they couldn’t go above and beyond their own simple, sin-contaminated and selfish way of thinking. They couldn’t let go of their focus on the idol they had created out of Abraham and stop following their “father of lies”, the devil. So they think they’ve come up with such a great come back to Jesus in verse 53 when they say, “Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do You make Yourself out to be?”

III. Jesus Honor the Father and His Word

- ✘ Man, talk about a great set up. They just opened the door for Jesus to step right through and kick everything into turbo-drive. And that’s exactly what He does by pointing them directly to the One who must be their focus, your focus and everyone’s focus above all else.
- ➔ In verses 54-55, “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.’ But you have not known Him. I know Him. If I were to say that I do not know Him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know Him and I keep His word.”
- ✘ You see, Jesus sets the example for all of us there. Even though He is 100% God with the Father, He focuses His honor and His glory upon God, the Father. He’s telling the Jews and every one of us here in this room that God the Father must be the one that we honor first in all things because He is God!
- ➔ And anyone who is not willing to do that ... Jesus says they are “a liar like [the Jews].” How were they lying? Because they said that they “believed in God” but they refused to believe in and live by God’s Word. They refused to honor His commands and believe His prophecies that all pointed to Jesus as God’s Son!

- ✘ It's there in God's Word that Jesus promised as He did, Jared, in the verse you chose for your confirmation verse: Matthew 28:20 where Jesus said, "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." You will never be alone; never without Your God. He is always, always with you!
- ➔ And when things get tough; when people are teasing you or life sends you something that might tempt you to give up and turn away from your faith, Isaiah, the verse you chose as your confirmation verse in Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Conclusion

- ✘ Jared and Jeffrey, a while back your great-grandmother, Arlene Jenkins, brought me this little book that belonged to a relative of your great-great-grandmother, named Myrtle Josephine Olsen. It's called, *Be Thou My Guide! A Handbook of Advice and Comfort for Young Lutherans Newly Confirmed*. It was printed in 1910 and given to your relative in 1917 (over 100 years ago).

➔ Let me close with a short quote from this little book. In fact, I want you to consider this a bit of encouragement from your ancestors. It says, "Take the time as you take time to read the newspapers or a good book." Today think of the time you take looking at something on your phone – You Tube or the like. Don't "say that you are too young or ignorant to read the Bible. Know that the Word of God was written also for children. For the Apostle John writes expressly in [1 John 2:13], "I write unto you, young men, because [you] have overcome the Wicked One. I write unto you, little children, because [you] have known the Father." Yes, he says that he writes just for this purpose to the young men, that they might be strong and the Word of God abide in them, that they might overcome the devil. But if you tell me that you do not like to read the Bible, then you are condemned by the Third commandment, which tells you out of [devoted] fear and love to God, you ought to gladly hear His Word and learn it.

Therefore, be diligent also in hearing the Word of God preached at your church. Never stay away from public worship, except for the most urgent reasons. And when you come to the house of God, be ready to hear... Then fervently beseech God to open your heart...so that you may not hear His saving Word in vain. Never forget that the devil is present at every service in church and cunningly seeks to steal the Word out of your heart, that you may not believe it and be saved.

Be diligent, too, in going to the Lord's Supper, and come worthily! ...When you feel no desire to partake of the Lord's Supper, then is just the time for you to go, for then you need it most. For then the enemy, the devil, is trying to make you careless and secure and to bring about your fall from grace.

That is the most cunning trick the devil uses to rob young Christians of their faith, by making them careless and indifferent towards the Word of their Savior. Just as soon as he separates them from the Word of Christ he has also separated them from Christ Himself. Then they have lost all power to resist his temptations, and fall an easy victim to his destructive wiles."

- ✘ This Isaiah, Jared, and Jeffrey – and all of us as God's children; this is exactly what Jesus was trying to warn the Jews, and you and me against. This is why it is so important that we understand who our true Father is; the One to whom we pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven...". Honor Him and His holy word, today as you confirm your faith in Him; as you make your promises to remain faithful to Him for the rest of your life. And know that He will never leave you, for He chose you and He redeemed you in the blood of His Son, Jesus! Amen.