

Sermon Discussion and Reflection Questions

John 8:48-59

Questions

- 1) Observe - Read John 8:48-59 aloud. How is this passage the climax or pinnacle of Jesus' dialogue with the Jews? This dialogue arguably begins at the Feast of the Booths (John 7:16) and concludes with Jesus' statement, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58).

What is Jesus deliberately, purposefully doing in this dialogue? Jamie Brown stated something like, "Jesus wants to reveal himself to all people at all times as the fountain of living water, the light of the world, and the liberator of the captives. Jesus is calling out to unbelievers to tell them they are captives, and he has come to set them free!" What is the difference between how the unbelievers respond to Jesus and how he responds to them? What does this reveal about him? His identity? His character? His mercy? And his grace?

- 2) Jesus speaks grace. See v48-51. How does Jesus respond to the crowd's mockery? To whom does he leave his vindication? What, instead, does he emphasize? He says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death" (John 8:51).

What Jesus makes sure he emphasizes is the promise of the Gospel! Jesus' statement in John 8:51 is a restatement of an earlier statement recorded in John's good news. What is the verse to which Jamie Brown compared this? How does the crowd respond? See John 8:52. How does Jesus respond to this? Does he back down? Equivocate? Instead, what does he do?

- 3) Jesus shows us his face. See v52-58. He does not make himself out to be anyone but himself! "I know him [the Father]. If I were to say I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him, and I keep his word" (John 8:55). Jamie Brown stated, "Jesus' correction of their rejection comes in the form of redirection." What does this mean? To what or whom does he redirect them? Why?

Jamie Brown stated, "There is so much pressure and temptation to water Jesus down. To make Jesus more palatable. To make Jesus more agreeable. And that pressure is on Jesus here. And that pressure is on every believer. And that pressure is on every church." What does he mean by this? Have you experienced this? Or have you seen it? Why is it so important to recognize this?

This is the moment the conversation reaches its highest point. Jesus speaks boldly and clearly about his identity. Jesus pulls back the curtain. "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). Why does this statement provoke the crowd to attempt to stone him? See Exodus 3:14. It is unmistakably clear Jesus is saying, "I am" What or who?

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Why does this matter? Because if you are going to stake your present and eternal life on Jesus? Believe him? Follow him? Trust him? Obey him? You need to know that Jesus was not just making stuff up!

Read the following familiar argument from C. S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*. "A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. ... Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God."¹ What is your response to this?

- 4) Jesus stands in our place. Read John 8:3-5. The chapter begins with a crowd ready to stone a woman caught in adultery. Now read John 8:59. We have come full circle. Jesus has done all of this so that the stones of sin, condemnation, and death would be thrown not at those who deserve it - including you and me - but at him. The stones are now directed at Jesus.

And that is how he wants it! He willingly takes all of that upon himself. "They picked up stones to throw at him" (John 9:59). Why did they not stone him?! His hour had not yet come. When would it come? When would Jesus freely and graciously and mercifully accept the punishment he did not deserve? And how did he respond? See Luke 23:34. Take a moment to reflect on this. What is your response?

- 5) Read Hebrews 1:1-4 aloud. This is the one by whom and for whom we were made. This is the one to whom we owe our very lives. This is the one we love and obey. This is the one we worship. And this is the one with whom we will spend eternity!

¹ Lewis, C. S. (1952). *Mere Christianity*, (New York, NY: Macmillan), 40–41. In all editions, this is Book II, Chapter 3, "The Shocking Alternative"