

Sermon – John 8:46-59 (Lent 5 – 2024)
The Truth of Christ Saves

Let us pray: Lord God, heavenly Father, Your Word is truth. We give thanks to You that You have revealed to us Your Son, our Savior through Your Word. Guard and keep us from misbelief, and grant us a steadfast faith in Your gospel, that we may have life eternal in Your kingdom; through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

⁴⁶ "Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?"

⁴⁷ "He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."

⁴⁸ Then 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 "And I do not seek My *own* glory; there is One who seeks and judges.

⁵¹ "Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death."

⁵² Then the Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.'

⁵³ "Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom do You make Yourself out to be?"

⁵⁴ Jesus answered, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God.

⁵⁵ "Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word.

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

⁵⁷ Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"

⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

⁵⁹ Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed,

When my brother was in Kindergarten, there was an assignment in class to write a sentence about yourself. And my brother wrote, "I am dirt. I am pig." My brother heard those words in a comedic sitcom we watched the night before. We thought it was funny. He wrote it down because he thought it was funny. The teacher, however, was concerned, and called my parents to talk about it with them.

But what if those words were true? Are not the words that Paul said about himself true, "**What a wretch that I am!**" Are we not speaking truth when we say those words? What if my brother wrote those words down. The world says, "Oh no no no, don't say that about

yourself.” “You’re a good person,” and on and on with all that self-esteem talk, which is completely absent of God, the world pushes. But we Christians admit our wretchedness! “I a poor, miserable sinner...” But we know that’s not the end of it. We know more of the truth than that. We know that we have been redeemed from sin, death, and the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with Christ’s holy and precious blood, and His innocent suffering and death in order that I might be His own.” And, therefore, because of Jesus we are God’s saints in the world, living lives worthy of the calling that we have received (Eph 4:1), and our very being glorifies God who made us and redeemed us and sanctified us.

But the world doesn’t know that part of it. And so they want us to lie about the first part.

Truth is good. Truth is important. And it is still found in the world. St. Augustine wrote, “A person who is a good and true Christian should realize that truth belongs to his Lord, wherever it is found, gathering and acknowledging it even in pagan literature, but rejecting superstitious vanities and deploring and avoiding those who ‘though they knew God did not glorify him as God.” (*On Christian Teaching*, II. 75) That pagan literature he is referring to would include the works of Plato and Aristotle. The truth is there when a scientist, even an atheist scientist, says that there are only two sexes, male and female, and a person’s confusion between genders is a mental disorder. The truth is there when the person struggling with addiction realizes that he is powerless to overcome his addiction.

As Christians, the truth is central to our lives, especially, the divine truth about God, which He reveals to us in Holy Scripture. Just consider how we end each of the meanings of the articles of the Creed: “This is most certainly true.”

Lies belong to the devil. They are from the devil. And they are destructive. The Pharisees held to the lie. Though Jesus’ miracles testified to His divine authority, though Jesus fulfilled the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, they would not believe the truth about Jesus. Rather they held to lies, and they spoke lies. They said Jesus was a Samaritan and had a demon. They called evil good and good evil, accusing the good and innocent Jesus with sin, but thinking that they would be good and right in stoning Jesus to death.

Dear Christians, you live in a world full of lies and falsehood. But the Commandments command us to have truth in our hearts and words. The Second Commandment requires us to hold fast to the truth of God and His Word, and the Eighth Commandment requires us to keep to the truth amongst our neighbors in love and charity.

The devil’s lies that are propagated by the world and the truth of Scripture against those lies could take a hundred sermons and we still wouldn’t get to the end of them. These lies include lies about the age of the earth, our origins, morality, who God is, who man is, how we are saved and so on. The devil produces false religions, false philosophies, false hopes, false beliefs, and so on.

But let us be a people of the truth since we are in Jesus who is the Truth. And we “**bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ**” (2 Cor 10:5).

So let us call good “good” and evil “evil”. And confess what God says in the word about us, that there is “**no one good, no not one.**” We are not good, but sinners. God, however, is good. We have sinned against Him and we deserve His judgment.

When the devil says our sins aren’t so bad, we say no, they’re damnable. When there is guilt in our hearts, instead of justifying sin or passing the blame, let’s admit the sin we’re guilty of. When we sin against our neighbor, let’s own it.

And so we confess the truth about us, and confess the truth about God. This is the truth that Jesus taught. And only by God’s grace, we undeserving people know it. Jesus said, “**If anyone keeps my word he shall never see death!**”

And very boldly, He confesses the saving truth, “**Before Abraham was, I AM.**” Jesus says He is Yahweh! Jesus is the One who spoke to Moses in the burning bush. “I AM” is the name God gave to Moses there. Blessed are they who are not offended by this!

It is no one less than God Himself that goes to the cross to redeem us. As one hymn goes, “He sent no angel to our race, Of higher or lower place, But wore the robe of human frame, And to this world Himself He came.” The blood Jesus sheds is the blood of God. The life Jesus offers on the cross is the life of God. This Jesus, the Great I AM, our Lord, Our God has changed everything for us. We are redeemed from the hell the devil has made for us by His lies and which we have deserved because of our sins.

And we cling to this truth which saves us from death and gives us eternal life: Jesus has saved us sinners. And so we can say these truths about ourselves: We are God’s beloved people. We are heirs of heaven. We are justified, righteous in God’s sight! Because of Jesus, this is all true.

He preserves us in this truth through His Word and Sacraments. Consider here in the Divine Service: The confession of sins keeps us honest with ourselves. The devil hates true repentance. He hates it when we confess our sins looking to Jesus, our Great I AM, for His forgiveness and salvation which He offers us in His Word and His Holy Supper. And His precious truth strengthens us in faith and lifts up our hearts to live our Christian lives with peace and joy as God’s redeemed!

And so, what a blessing to confess the truth! Think also of what takes place when we confess the Creeds! We speak every word with the confidence that “This is most certainly true.” We confess the creeds in defiance of the devil, in defiance of every lie that the world puts before us. We confess the true God in whom alone is forgiveness, salvation, and life.

May God guard and protect us in the truth of Christ our Savior. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.