

Holy Trinity 6/15/25
John 8:48-59 C

APPOINTED GOSPEL, JOHN'S GOSPEL, THE 8TH CHAPTER

The crowd is angry – really angry. Livid. “Just who do you think you are?”, that’s really what they ask Jesus. So, Jesus tells them, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am”* (v. 58). To understand the words of Jesus, we have to go back to Moses, standing before the burning bush. God tells Moses, *“I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”* So Moses asks God, *“If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?”* God said to Moses, *“I am who I am”* (Ex 3:10, 13-14). To the crowd in the temple that day, Jesus made it perfectly clear that He was not just another man. He told them He was very God of very God.

That is why they were outraged. To claim be to God was blasphemy, a sin calling for death. The crowd was convinced that this was the lie of a demon-possessed Samaritan and, they pick up stones to kill Him.

To the Jews the idea that Jesus, a mere man, could be God is a scandal. They know full well that there is only One God. They refer to Him as Father. Now along comes Jesus. He too claims to be God. In fact - His claim gets even more outrageous. *“You have not known Him”*, that is, God the Father, Jesus says. It’s very simply really: How many of you have ever heard someone say, “I believe in God”? Or better yet, you’ve heard the wisdom of this world call out, “I’ve had many a talk with the big man upstairs.” On this Trinity Sunday, Jesus is teaching us that if you do not believe in Jesus, true God, born of the Virgin Mary, and true God, begotten

of the Father from all eternity, you worship a false god. You can't know the Father if you don't know Jesus.

And you don't have to take my word for it, listen to Jesus, "You say the Father is your God - but you have not known Him." Jesus Himself calls that belief in God false. Can you imagine saying such a thing? Can you imagine Jesus saying this to a Muslim of our day? To a Mormon? To a Jehovah's Witness?

In our text, Jesus is talking to the Jews. But He could just as easily be talking to anyone belonging to any of the false religions in our world. "You claim God as your Father - but you don't know Me. And if you don't know Me, you can't possibly know the Father."

How would a devout Muslim react to this? How would a devout Mormon react? A devout Jehovah's Witness? You know how they would react. They would be angry. They would be livid. How dare Jesus make such a claim! How dare Jesus – or any of us – say that if you don't worship Jesus as true God and true man, you don't know God the Father.

And that's exactly how Muslims view Christians. Please do not ever believe the lie of the father of all lies that Jews, Muslims and Christians worship the same God. They don't. For the devout Jew, the idea of God being a Trinity is a scandal.

For the Muslim, it's even worse. The idea of a God being a Trinity is the most grievous of offenses. If you confess that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the presence of a Muslim - he is obligated to seek to either convert you, by force if necessary, or to kill you.

In our text Jesus is just as blunt with the Jews. "You have not known [the Father]," Jesus tells them. In fact, He even calls them liars. Can you imagine saying this to someone about their devout religious beliefs?

And then Jesus goes even further. He tells them that He is greater than father Abraham. In fact, Jesus tells them that He is greater than all the prophets. This would be like telling a Muslim that Jesus is greater than their so-called prophet, Mohammed. You do that and you may just get yourself killed.

But, on this Trinity Sunday and every time you confess Jesus, that is exactly what you do. You make a very bold confession. You confess that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One God in three Persons. You confess that there is no other God than this One true God. You confess that no one can claim to have God as their Father and worship Him who does not believe that Jesus is true God and true man who has redeemed them. You confess that everyone else who has a different belief about God is wrong and is a liar.

This is a bold confession. It makes people angry. Livid. And you, yourself, understand that anger, because you've felt it. Sometimes, you have different -- quite different in fact -- beliefs about God. But, that god is a god of your own design. You know, the holy trinity of me, myself, and I. You know all about religion. Rather than calling upon the Lord your God in the day of trouble, you worry and stew and fret; and don't forget your self-pity. Rather than folding your hand in prayer, you cross your fingers for good luck. Rather than trusting the promises of God's Word, the promise of the lottery ticket looks oh-so-much better. You have not honored those that God has placed in authority over you; you've ogled that woman that is not your wife; you've stolen from your neighbor -- especially when you did not help them in their need; you've lied, gossiped, coveted; you're resentful, bitter, and you've allowed the sun to go down on your anger again and again and again.

Let's be honest. There are times you just want to cry to Jesus, "Just who do you think you are?", telling me how to live MY life?!!

You've made God out to be a liar and denied Jesus with your thoughts, words, and deeds. But, here is the Good News for you, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word, he will never see death,"* Jesus says (v. 52).

That is a bold confession to make on this Trinity Sunday. There is only one True God. And the only True God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is no other God – not of any false religion or the god that you design for yourself. And in this perverse world, that is an outrage. A scandal. It will make people angry. Livid. Filled with so much hate they will kill. After all, that's precisely what happened to Jesus. In the temple, in our lesson, the people picked up rocks to stone Jesus. But it was not time yet.

However, the time would come soon enough. Jesus IS crucified, as Peter reminds us – precisely because He is God. But in His death and resurrection, life is given. *"Truly, truly I say to you, if anyone keeps My word, he will never see death."* Eternal life. Eternal life in JESUS. Not in a generic "God," that everyone is free to define for himself/herself. Not in the false god of the Jews, the Muslims, the Mormons, the Jehovah Witnesses, or any false religion that denies Jesus. But eternal life in JESUS.

At Pentecost last Sunday, we heard all about the sending and the giving. The Father sent the Son to lay down His life for you. In this sending Jesus' life is given up so that your life may be restored. The Father sends the Son to lay down His life so that sinners who have forsaken Him will have forgiveness, life, and salvation.

And then, the sending and the giving continues. From the Father and the Son proceeds the Holy Spirit - the Lord and Giver of Life. The One who will guide you into all truth. This is the comfort given to you as you confess the mystery of the Holy Trinity - the Father loves you so much that He sent His Son to die for you. The Son loves you so much that He willingly obeyed His Father and laid down His life for you. And the Father and the Son love you so much that now you have been given the Holy Spirit. The Spirit who guides you into all truth and comforts you so that you are not shaken, but rather your heart is glad and your whole being rejoices.

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