



Table Talk

By Rev. Timothy J. Swenson • ILT Dean of Chapel

The Holy Trinity

June 12, 2022

JOHN 8:48-59

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"Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." Vs. 58



The reading we've been given is part of a larger segment (Jn. 8:12-59) in which Jesus confronts the Jews. He confronts them especially in their establishment of an institutionalized religion. In every hearing of this text, it raises again and again the contradiction between a religion well established and the revelation... the revelation of Christ. One cannot hear this text without experiencing a sense of tragedy, the tragedy of human blindness, and the loss humanity suffers in this world that is passing away because it simply cannot receive the truth of Christ Jesus. It is bound to reject him and the truth of his person. Here in this text, John may have Jesus addressing the Jews, but he means his words for every generation. As the generations rise and fall, their human institutions grasp after self-preservation even as the revelation of the truth (which is Jesus Christ) critiques them, deconstructs them, and relegates them to the dust of this old and passing-away creation.

Jesus' audience, the Jews of Jerusalem, of Pharisaism, and of the Temple continually misunderstand his words. They keep holding up their ancestry. It is impeccable. They are descended from Abraham, the progeny of an ancient primogenitor. Jesus rains on their parade. He confronts them with his own eternity while relegating Abraham to mere

temporality. "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am" (vs. 58). This "I am" saying joins the "I am" sayings of Jesus and expresses the pre-existence of Jesus (Jn. 1:1-3). Jesus' words and the claim they make offend these religious practitioners and protectors of their institution. Rejecting the truth confronting them in Jesus Christ, they attempt to stone him, ostensibly to shut him up in the silence of death.

The Father emptied himself of a godly condemnation of the world (Jn.3:17) by sending the Son. The Son emptied himself of grasping after godhood (Ph. 2:6) and by his death became available to all humanity by being distributed at the pulpit, the font, the altar, and the confessional. From these places, the Holy Spirit goes to work to establish faith in the hearers wherever and whenever it pleases God. Amen!

Table Talk: Discuss the challenge of institutions protecting themselves against the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Pray: Heavenly Father, establish the "now" as the whenever and wherever I'm to receive faith. Amen



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48 The Jews answered him, Are we not right in saying 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 Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. 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, as did the prophets, yet you say, If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death. 53 Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who 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 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. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. 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 was, I am. 59 So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.



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