

John Ch8v12-20

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[0 : 00] Giving us a little bit of information about who he is and what you're doing and how we can be praying for him.! John chapter 8, and we're going to be reading from verses 12 to 20 just in a moment.

But as Alex said, my wife and I, Monica, we are privileged to serve as members at Carrig Tool Baptist Church. And we're super thankful for the partnership that we have with you guys here at Carrig Align.

And super thankful for all the churches we're privileged to partner with in the Court Carry Project. Some ways you can be praying for us. So you can pray for Monica and I as we just moved over in January.

So we continue to adjust and it's been an awesome experience. But still just getting some logistical things worked out with visas and that sort of thing. You can pray for us as we'll be both starting as students at UCC in the fall.

I think two weeks. I should probably check on that. See what time we actually start. But yeah, you can pray as we begin our studies there at UCC. And ultimately pray for us at Carrig Tool Baptist Church as we seek to shine a light into a rapidly growing community.

[1 : 31] But a community that is in great need of the gospel. And so please pray for those things. But like I said, we're going to be in John chapter 8 this morning, verses 12 to 20.

So let's read together. John records, So the Pharisees said to him, You are testifying about yourself.

Your testimony is not valid. Jesus said, Even if I testify about myself, my testimony is true because I know where I come from and I know where I'm going.

But you don't know where I come from or where I'm going. You judge by human standards, but I judge no one. And if I do judge, my judgment is true.

Because it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. Even in your law, it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. I am the one who testifies about myself.

[2 : 41] And the Father who sent me testifies about me. Then they asked him, Where is your Father? You know neither me nor my Father, Jesus answered. If you knew me, you would also know my Father.

He spoke these words by the treasury while teaching in the temple. But no one seized him because his hour had not yet come. Let's pray together. God, this morning, I ask that you would speak to us through your word.

God, you know better than anyone my fears, my anxieties, my inability to do this task, God, of preaching your word. But I ask that you would, by the power of your spirit, empower me to speak with clarity.

And God, these truths we encounter, would you help us to leave this place with a greater understanding of who you are. That you are the Messiah.

That you're God in human flesh. And that we can trust you with every ounce of our being. God, would you give me clarity of thought and clarity of speech.

[3 : 50] And make all of this this morning more like your son, Jesus. And we ask all these things in his name. Amen. Now, when I was a child, there was a popular Christian children's song.

You may know it. It was called, I Just Want to Be a Sheep. Does anyone know that song? Okay, perfect. Two people. Awesome. Well, I know it's a little silly, but just bear with me here.

One of the verses goes something like this. I don't want to be a Pharisee because they're not fair, you see. I know. I know.

It's a little silly. It gets a few points for creativity with the play on words. But still, it's a little ridiculous. There's actually another verse, which is even worse, if you can believe it.

It's about not wanting to be a Sadducee because they are so sad, you see. You can save that away for later. I'm not going to share the whole thing with you.

[4 : 48] But while the song, it's a little ridiculous, it's a little silly. It does serve to illustrate a reality that we find in our text today. The Pharisees have not been fair, you see.

They have not seen Jesus for who he truly is. In response to his proclamation that he is the light of the world, the Pharisees question Jesus.

And Jesus, as we're going to see, he defends himself by grounding his teaching in his own identity and in the witness of God the Father. But before we can unpack Jesus' teaching and the response from the Pharisees, it's important that we situate this exchange in its proper context.

In the previous chapter, chapter 7, Jesus made his way to the temple and he began to teach some of those gathered there for the Feast of Booths, which is also called the Feast of Tabernacles.

Now, this feast was rich with symbolism. Part of what would happen during the feast is that individuals, they would live in these small shelters that were built to remember God's provision during the days when their ancestors had wandered in the wilderness.

[6 : 08] There was also the pouring out of water by the priest, which was meant to represent God's ultimate provision of a Messiah and the knowledge of God that that Messiah would bring.

So Jesus' teaching in chapter 7, verses 37 and 38, where he offers living water to the spiritually thirsty, it speaks with special significance.

You can imagine this incredible scene, the pouring out of water meant to anticipate the coming of the Messiah, and here he is in the flesh.

He's offering living water. Now, in our modern copies of the Bible, if you were to look down, you'll see that in between Jesus' teaching, which ends at chapter 7, verse 52, in our passage today, you'll find the account of a woman caught in adultery.

But when the Gospel of John was first written, there would have been no separation between Jesus' teaching, which ends at chapter 7, verse 52, in our passage today.

[7 : 20] The events in our passage, verses 12 to 20, they would have followed immediately after chapter 7, verse 52. Now, you're probably thinking to yourself, why in the world is Tyler telling us all of this?

Well, it helps to set the stage for the exchange that we see in our passage today. Jesus' teaching in our text today would also have taken place during the Feast of Booths.

And the significance of Jesus' teaching, it's going to be best understood in that context, the context of the celebration of the feast. So now that I've thoroughly confused everyone, let's turn to our text today.

looking again at verse 12. Jesus spoke to them again. I am the light of the world.

Anyone who follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. To those who are gathered in the temple, Jesus presents two options.

[8 : 31] He presents belief leading to light and to life, and by implication, disbelief leading to darkness and to death.

Now, if you were to flip briefly through John's gospel, you would find that this language of light is quite common. In the opening chapter of the book that we actually read this morning, chapter 1, verses 1 to 4, we're told that all things were created through him.

And apart from him, not one thing was created that has been created. In him was life. And that life was the light of men.

And in our passage today, this theme, which runs throughout John's gospel, it's going to find new expression. Because remember that Jesus is teaching here.

It's occurring during the Feast of Booths. That commemoration of God's provision, where the people would live in those small shelters, and the priest would pour out the water in anticipation of the Messiah.

[9 : 38] Another interesting element of the Feast of Booths that I haven't yet mentioned, it was a ceremony where torches and large lamps would be lit as a reminder of the pillar of fire which guided the people of Israel during their wanderings in the wilderness.

These lights and torches, which were lit during the feast, they wouldn't have been tiny flames. It would have been a massive blaze, and it would have been something that could have been clearly seen both inside and outside the temple grounds.

So for those who have just heard Jesus' teaching that he is the light of the world, the light associated with the ceremony would have surely been called to their mind.

And again, this is an incredible image because during a festival where the ceremony of light unfolds, a ceremony serving as a reminder of God's presence and his provision during the wilderness wanderings, here is Jesus, God in human flesh, dwelling among his creation in order to make provision for humanity's sin.

And Jesus still offers this choice to each and every one of us. Light and life for those who believe, for all those who would believe, or darkness and death to those who reject him.

[11 : 09] So how is it that the Pharisees respond to Jesus' powerful proclamation? Let's look again at verse 13.

It says, So the Pharisees said to him, You are testifying about yourself. Your testimony is not valid.

Now, you probably don't find the Pharisees' accusation in response to Jesus all that shocking. Because if you're familiar with the relationship between the religious leaders and Jesus, as it's described throughout the Gospels, the response probably doesn't strike you as anything out of the ordinary.

But once again, in today's text, we find these religious leaders walking the same well-worn path. And what's more, they drum up this objection that Jesus has actually already addressed before.

In a previous exchange in chapter 5. In chapter 5, verses 31 to 47, Jesus lays out several reliable witnesses.

[12 : 23] John the Baptist, Jesus' works themselves, and God the Father, they have all testified to Jesus' identity and his mission.

But in our passage today, the Pharisees respond to this teaching by saying to him in verse 13, You're testifying about yourself. Your testimony is not valid.

Now, in one sense, what the Pharisees say, it's not all that unreasonable. Because we find in places like the book of Deuteronomy, in chapter 19:15, one witness cannot establish any iniquity or sin against a person, whatever that person has done.

A fact must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. And Jesus himself, he's referenced this sort of command in John chapter 5.

But the problem is these Pharisees, they've either ignored or are unaware of the fact that there are others vouching for Jesus. Jesus isn't the only one who has been giving testimony in support of his identity and his ministry.

[13 : 38] So, at the outset, there's a sense in which the foundation of the Pharisees' accusation towards Jesus, it's just wrong. But look at how Jesus responds.

At least to begin with, Jesus shows that even if it were the case that he's the only one bearing witness to his identity and to his ministry, it wouldn't matter. How is it that he does this?

He responds to this accusation from the Pharisees, first by grounding the truth of his testimony in his own identity. To say it another way, Jesus' testimony is true because of who Jesus is.

Let's look again at verses 14 to 16. We find in verse 14, even if I testify about myself, Jesus replied, my testimony is true because I know where I came from and where I am going.

But you don't know where I come from or where I am going. You judge by human standards. I judge no one. And if I do judge, my judgment is true because it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me.

[15 : 00] Jesus says to these Pharisees, listen, even if what you're saying is true, it doesn't matter. What I am saying is true because of who I am. Jesus is the Messiah.

He's God in human flesh, and God does not lie. In Numbers 23:19, the author tells us that God is not like his human creation when it comes to matters of trustworthiness.

For God is not a man that he might lie or a son of man that he might change his mind. Does he speak and not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

And of course, the implied answer to those rhetorical questions is absolutely not. Or you can consider Titus 1, verses 1 to 3, where Paul introduces the epistle this way.

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness, in the hope of eternal life that God, who cannot lie, promised before time began.

[16 : 16] There's no need to worry about whether Jesus is telling the truth or not. He's not been lying to these Pharisees. In fact, he cannot lie. Now, I want to stop for just a moment because for those of us who are in Christ, this truth should be a point of great comfort.

In Romans 8:28, it tells us that in every single circumstance, God is working for our good. That is a certainty. Or when we're told in 1 John 1:9, that the person who confesses their sins will be met with forgiveness, you can rest in that truth.

That is a certainty. Jesus is God incarnate, and God will never, indeed, he can never lie. His testimony is trustworthy always.

In Jesus, he continues his response to the Pharisees in verses 15 and 16. It says, You judge by human standards.

I judge no one. And if I do judge, my judgment is true, because it is not I alone who judge, but I am the Father who sent me. Now, if you're anything like me, you probably found verses 15 to 16 a bit confusing, at least at first glance.

[17 : 42] Is Jesus saying he does judge here, or that he doesn't judge, or is John just sort of contradicting himself? Well, I don't believe so, but I need to be clear on my starting point.

I think, I believe that the Bible is God's word. And as we've already discussed, God cannot lie. And so, I don't believe that when we properly understand what a text is saying, the Bible ever contradicts itself.

But those considerations aside, I think we can probably give the human author of the Gospel of John the benefit of the doubt, because it seems unlikely that in the span of just a few verses, he would fail to notice if he were actually contradicting himself.

So, what is he saying here? Well, I think rather than understanding Jesus' words here as a general claim to the effect that he never judges under any circumstances, I think they're meant to communicate a particular kind of judgment that Jesus never engages in.

And we can begin to see this with greater clarity when we look at how he describes the judgment of the Pharisees. He uses this phrase by human standards.

[18 : 57] Or some translations, they use the phrase according to the flesh. The Pharisees are way off base in their evaluations of Jesus.

And I love the way this one scholar puts it. He says, they see his flesh, as it were, but they never contemplate the possibility that he could be the word made flesh.

Jesus sees things as they truly are. And he judges rightly. The text tells us that his judgments are good and they're right and they're made in unison with the Father.

And again, in this truth, you and I can be thankful. We live in a fallen world. A world where, because of sin, things are not as they should be.

As we mentioned this morning, if you watch or listen to the news for an hour, this will become abundantly clear. But in the midst of a world so often marked by injustice, we can trust that God is seeing things for what they are.

[20 : 08] And one day, he will exercise final judgment. This is the way the Apostle Paul describes it. He, God the Father, has set a day when he is going to judge the world in righteousness by the man he has appointed.

He's provided proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead. And you can rest assured that when he judges, he will judge correctly.

Not in a human or fallible and fleshly way. So to take stock of where we've come so far, so thus far, Jesus, he's grounded the truth of his testimony in his identity.

But now, he's going to bring an outside witness to his defense. Jesus teaches those gathered in the temple that his testimony is also affirmed by God the Father.

Again, in verses 17 and 18, John records that even in your law, it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true.

[21 : 17] I am the one who testifies about myself and the Father who sent me testifies about me. Jesus says to them, By the way, it isn't just me who's saying these things.

Again, we've already seen that in chapter 5, Jesus had presented several reliable witnesses! who have vouched for his identity. But in our text today, he mentions just one witness, God the Father.

So how is it that the Father has testified and vouched for Jesus' identity? Well, one way was his affirmation of Jesus and his ministry that took place at Jesus' baptism.

This is how the Gospel of Matthew records those events. When Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water. The heavens suddenly opened for him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him.

And a voice from heaven said, This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Jesus and his ministry had received the Father's stamp of approval, a visible and audible affirmation that Jesus is the Son of God, God in human flesh.

[22 : 43] And we see another incredible example of this historically verifiable event of the resurrection where God raises Jesus from the dead and he vindicates his claims.

But sadly, despite these things, we find the Pharisees unwilling or unable to accept what Jesus is saying. In verse 19, they ask Jesus, Where is this Father that you've been saying so much about?

Now, the text, it doesn't say whether this is a genuine question on the part of the Pharisees or whether they're attempting to mock Jesus' teaching in some way.

And I can certainly see them asking this question to sort of poke fun at Jesus. But either way, this question represents a failure to understand Jesus' very nature and the closeness of the relationship that he shares with God, the Father.

And we can see this in Jesus' response to their question in verse 19. He says to them, You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would also know my Father.

[24 : 00] How is it that Jesus can say something like that? Well, John tells us in John chapter 1, 18, that no one has seen God, the one and only Son who is himself God and is at the Father's side.

He has revealed him. Another translation says that Jesus is in closest relationship with the Father. How close is this relationship between Jesus and the Father?

Well, let's flip forward, if you would, just briefly to John chapter 14. John chapter 14, and we're going to be looking just really briefly at verses 8 through 11.

John records this interaction between Jesus and Philip. In verse 8, it says, Lord, said Philip, show us the Father, and that's enough for us.

Jesus said to him, have I been among you all this time, and you still don't know me, Philip? The one who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, show us the Father?

[25 : 21] Don't you believe that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me? The words I speak to you, I do not speak on my own. The Father who lives in me does his works.

Believe me that I am in the Father. And the Father is in me. Otherwise, believe because of the works themselves. We have to remember that yes, there is a distinction between the persons of the Trinity, between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

But each person partakes of the divine nature and is fully God. Sharing a closeness and an intimacy that is impossible for you and I as finite humanity to fully grasp.

As John says, the Son is in closest relationship with the Father. How is it that Jesus can say to these Pharisees that if they knew him, they would know the Father?

It's because the Father and Son share a relationship such that Jesus can say, to see me is to see him. God's love and so in this exchange with the Pharisees, we've seen Jesus defend the truth of his teachings by appealing to his own identity in the testimony of the Father.

[26 : 46] But now as we come to the final verse of this passage, we find John's affirmation of God's sovereign control over all things.

If you look with me one more time at verse 20, John makes a point here to tell us where it is that Jesus has been teaching. He says, he, that is Jesus, he spoke these words by the treasury while teaching in the temple, but no one seized him because his hour had not yet come.

It's important for us to remember that this is a public place where Jesus has been saying these things. And Jesus, he's saying some things that if they're understood by the people listening to them, they're likely to put them in some pretty hot water.

But John reminds us again that Jesus was being guarded by God for arrest until the proper time. The time would come for Jesus to be arrested and handed over to the authorities, but not quite yet.

There was work yet to be done, and nothing and no one could thwart God's plan. And brothers and sisters, this is true not only of the events surrounding Jesus' life and ministry, but our lives as well.

[28 : 15] Over every intimate detail of your life, over every intimate detail of my life, God is in control. God is working his perfect plan, a plan that will result in your good and his glory.

Let's pray together. God, thank you so much for the opportunity to open your word today. God, I just want to thank you for who you are.

And as we leave this place, would you instill in us a greater understanding of your nature and your kindness to us in Jesus Christ? And would you make us more and more like him each and every day?

Amen.