

John 8:12-30

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Date: 13 October 2019

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[0:00] We're reading from John chapter 8, verses 8 through 30. At this time, we're going to honor God by honoring his word and listening to it read aloud.

Again, that's John chapter 8, verses 12 through 30. That's on page 990 if you have one of these white pew Bibles. And some of you will notice that we are not reading the first part of John chapter 8 today.

We're skipping chapter 7, verses 53 through 811. And you'll also probably notice that many of your Bibles have notes that the earliest and most reliable manuscripts of John's Gospel do not contain these verses.

Which leads us to believe that they were not intended to be there by the original author. So we will be starting in verse 12. Please stand, if you are not, for the reading of God's word. Again, Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. So the Pharisee said to him, You are bearing witness about yourself. Your testimony is not true.

[1:09] Jesus answered, Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true. For I know where I came from and where I'm going. But you do not know where I come from or where I'm going.

You judge according to the flesh. I judge no one. Yet, even if I do judge, my judgment is true. For it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me.

In your law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me. They said to him, Where is your father?

Jesus answered, You know neither me nor my father. If you knew me, you would know my father also. These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple.

But no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come. So he said to them again, I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin.

[2:13] Where I am going, you cannot come. So the Jews said, Will he kill himself, since he says, Where I am going, you cannot come? He said to them, You are from below.

I am from above. You are of this world. I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sin. For unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins.

So they said to him, Who are you? Jesus said to them, Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. I have much to say about you, and much to judge.

But he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him. They did not understand he had been speaking to them about the Father.

So Jesus said to them, When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.

[3:17] And he who sent me is with me, and he has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him. As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

This is the word of the Lord. Please be seated. Good morning. Let me also add my greetings to all the other greetings that have taken place this morning.

It's a joy to be together. And as we turn to the Word, let us turn to the Lord of the Word in prayer. Father, we come to you this morning.

And as Moses assembled all of Israel together, he charged them to hear your Word and to do your Word, stating that it is no empty Word.

But your words are our very life. And so, Father, we come to your Word and seek life. Would you reveal your Son, beautiful, glorious, marvelous, splendid, worthy of all of our adoration and our

affection and our lives.

[5 : 05] Help us at this end, we pray. Amen. Amen. How does one introduce themselves to others?

What do you do when you are put in this situation and you have a moment to think, what do you want others to know about you?

What would you say to make yourself known? Possibly your name, hopefully your name, your vocation, perhaps, your family, area of study.

I default to think of myself as a husband, father, student, sometimes, still, pastor.

However, introductions encapsulate our lives in a snapshot. It conveys identity, purpose, and meaning.

[6 : 10] And as we turn to John chapter 8 this morning, the question I want to ask is, how do you think Jesus ought to introduce himself?

Now, certainly, this isn't the first time that John is introducing Jesus to us. We are already eight chapters in. John has already told us what he thinks of Jesus in the first chapter.

He has called John the Baptist a noteworthy contemporary of Jesus to introduce him as well. An unnamed woman has introduced Jesus to us.

A transformed village has done likewise. And yet, when we arrive to John chapter 8, Jesus takes it upon himself to reintroduce himself.

It's possibly the first time he's had a direct conversation with the Pharisees. The Pharisees up to this point have been on the periphery, acting upon hearsay and crowd reactions.

[7 : 20] And perhaps here in John chapter 8, you begin to see the repetitive nature of John. That he's saying things that he has said before. In John chapter 8, there are no fewer than 23 occurrences of Jesus' use of I.

Let me tell you about myself. This chapter is about self-disclosure. There are things that you need to know about me, particularly who I am, why I'm here, and what I am saying.

In other words, it is Jesus' self-understanding of his person, his purpose, and his proclamation. Who I am, why I'm here, and what I'm saying.

Person, purpose, and proclamation. Who I am. No one seems to be able to get a handle on Jesus. It's indicated in verse 25.

Who are you? Jerusalem was in knots according to chapter 7, verse 43. The topic at hand was Jesus. The city was divided.

[8 : 40] It's amplified given the festivities of the holiday, the Feast of Booths, the eight-day celebration in which people were all assembled in Jerusalem, commemorating God's faithful provision for his people as their ancestors had sojourned in the desert.

Jerusalem versioned with people and crowds, and the unfolding discourse was, what do you think about this man, Jesus? Is this the Christ?

Is this the prophet? Is this a criminal? Is this person just an insurrectionist? Was he simply just a religious fanatic making claims with little grounds?

And it is in this environment that Jesus commences on a dialogue with the religious teachers, the Pharisees, and the Jews. And he discloses himself.

It's largely a dialogue. You'll see it with questions and answers going back and forth. And he is not only answering questions, but he is advancing his identity and mission in the gospel.

[9 : 51] At times he speaks ambiguously, but by the end of the chapter, it is very clear what he said about himself.

The religious community will act against him. According to verse 20 in chapter 8, he's able to speak words publicly in the treasury.

And 39 verses later, he's no longer welcome in the temple. He has to flee and go into hiding. For Jesus, his identity is tethered to that of his Father.

His existence and his identity are inseparable from his Father. He wants to assert that he is a son. He is a son. And it's not strange in Judaism to say that you're a son of God.

The people actually saw themselves as sons of God. You may recall being students of the Bible when God's people are in captivity under the harsh hand of Pharaoh in slavery.

[10 : 58] God calls a servant Moses. And Moses goes and confronts Pharaoh. And his statement to Pharaoh is, Israel is my firstborn son.

So part of the collective identity of the people of God were they were sons of God. Yet Jesus, in this passage, wants to assert that he is a son of a different sort.

He is a sent son. He came from heaven. He's heaven sent. And he's temporarily earthly bound. You see that he is, he will say, I am, you are from below.

I am from above. Verse 23, you are of this world. I am not of this world. His origin would prove unknown to the religious leaders.

His mission was unclear to them. They knew not where he came from or where he was going. John wanted to convey to us the worldly mind couldn't get a grasp of who Jesus was.

[12:04] Jesus was a divine concept. Jesus also highlights his truthfulness. 14, 16, and verse 26. He's an honest son revealing the character of God consistently and accurately.

And finally, he's a sent son. He's a sent son. He's an honest son. And he's a divine son. He shares divinity with God the Father.

And this would be a good place to mention, as we journey through the Gospel of John, what John is often noted for. John is noted for the seven I am statements.

We've encountered two of them so far in the book of John. I am the bread of life came earlier, a few chapters ago. And this morning, Jesus declares, I am the light of the world.

These I am statements that Jesus makes all usually have predicates. A verb followed by something describing the subject. However, on a few occasions in John's Gospel, there is no predicate.

[13:10] meaning there are these free-floating I am statements. There is actually seven of them. And of these seven, three are found in this chapter.

Which makes it particularly interesting. The ones that I want to highlight are in verses 24 and 28.

Because what is transpiring here that some people will say, well, many will say, is Jesus is taking upon himself words that are only attributed to God himself.

Jesus is taking upon human lips what Israel understood as being reserved to God alone. The great divine name I am. Also embedded in the book of Exodus.

That you remember when God calls Moses. And Moses says, well, God, I need to be able to tell the people who sent me. And he simply replies to Moses, well, tell them this.

I am has sent you. And here, for the rest of the Old Testament, this name encapsulates the divine name.

[14:24] That this is the name that we use to represent God himself. The prophet Isaiah would take on this, this captures the same usage in the 43rd chapter where he writes, before me, no God was formed, nor shall there be any after me.

I, I am the Lord, and besides me, there is no Savior. I declared and saved and proclaimed when there was no strange God among you, and you are my witnesses, declares the Lord, and I am God. Henceforth, I am He. There is none who can deliver out of my hand. And here, you begin to see Jesus takes upon His own lips the divine name.

The great irony of the Isaiah quotation was that the people were supposed to be witnesses to God. And here, in John chapter 8, the people are calling Jesus to summon a witness for His divinity when they themselves, according to Isaiah, were to be the witness.

Jesus takes upon Himself language that is solely attributed to God, and in so doing, He asserts His divinity. They don't get it at this point in the passage, but they will get it by the end.

[15:44] He is claiming divinity with the Father. Jesus is the divine Son of God. This is Jesus as a person. This is who I am.

Secondly, why I am here? why I am here? Verse 12, Jesus spoke to them saying, I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. I am the light of the world.

Given the role of social media and society and the proliferation of news, there are outlandish statements made every single day.

And using our sensibilities, we are able to write them off and attribute them to sometimes the disillusioned. But here you have one of the most stunning statements about Jesus.

[16:49] You can imagine, the feast is nearing the end. Jesus has already taken upon Himself the pinnacle moment of the feast, declaring Himself to be the source of life-giving water.

As a matter of fact, He's already asserted earlier in this Gospel that He is life-giving bread. And here, in the 8th chapter, He takes it upon Himself to say, I am the source of life-giving light.

Life-giving light. The feast of booths had already commenced eight days beforehand with a significant ritual. At the end of the first day, in the evening, in the court of women, adjacent to the

treasury where Jesus likely was at this point of time, there were four large golden lamps that were lit.

And I'm going to read a portion of the Mishnah because it really tells us what happens. At the close of the festival on the first night, the people went down to the court of women where they made a great amendment.

There were golden candlesticks that, of course, there were golden candlesticks and four youths of the priestly stock in their hands jars of oil holding 120 logs which they poured into all the bowls.

[18 : 25] They made wicks from this oil and they set the candlesticks alight and there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect this light. And so the picture is this, there are these four giant bowls in the courtyard.

These young youths would ascend these ladders and it says these bowls held 120 logs drenched in oil and they would light it on the evening of the first night.

And you can imagine the festival is at its conclusion. The feast was now drawing to a close. The four large golden lampstands were to be extinguished.

It's not difficult to envision being in the courtyard. And as they cease, similar to that moment when you turn off your lamp next to your bed, for that moment, you know, when the lights go out and your eyes adjust, it's just pitch black.

You can't see anything. You can imagine in the darkness of that courtyard, as those lamps go out, Jesus declares, I am the light of the world.

[19 : 41] Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. You see, the boldness and the assertion of the statement drove the Pharisees to dismiss him.

That's outlandish. That is fake news. Get a witness. There's no way you can make that claim. You see, what light does is light actually does two things.

One, it can actually blind and illuminate. And it became very clear to me being a father. So I have young children and flashlights are so fascinating to them and to me as well.

Because if you give a young child a flashlight, they take it and they take the light and they shine it directly in their eyes.

light. And you look at them and you go, no, no, no, no, that's not how it works. That's actually light blinding you.

[20 : 48] Light illuminates. Light moves darkness. In the same way, when it would be, we tell one another, do not look at the sun directly.

Why? Because light blinds. And at the same time illuminates. And as this passage unfolds, as John's gospel unfolds, you'll find this.

Because for some people, light illuminates and light transforms and light helps the blind person see as you'll see in the ninth chapter. But for some, light actually blinds.

And you see that in this chapter. See, the image of light for the first century Jew was meaning laden. There's so many symbols. It was the pillar of fire that led God's people as they wandered in the Exodus.

Israel's national song declared that the Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? Israel's prophets foretold a day when God would raise up an individual, a servant that would be a light to the nations.

[22 : 02] God had provided ancestors with bread. God had provided their ancestors with water. God was providing His people now with lights.

The diagnosis is the world is in complete darkness. Sure, we've tried to illuminate it ourselves and to create little lights. But Jesus wants the reader and the hearer to know why He's here and He's here to illuminate.

He's commenced a divine rescue mission. He has been entrusted with a task. He is a sent son dispatched into the world not to condemn it but to save it through Himself.

And we see this because He's moving in this text. He's moving forward to a final destination. The language of the text is He is going somewhere, hence the invitation to follow.

He is doing something. And ironically the Jews concluded that He was going to take His own life when in actuality He was taking the Old Testament image, I am the light and I am leading a new exodus.

[23 : 16] I'm leading not just a nation of people but I'm leading the world from bondage and blindness to salvation and sight.

Jesus is summoning a people to follow Him to believe in Him and His message. He is the light of the world. Who I am? The divine Son of God.

What I'm doing? Summoning the world to follow me. And finally, what I'm saying is proclamation. John the writer wants us to be sure that we don't only understand Jesus as a miracle worker or some moral exemplar we are to imitate.

He was not just an incredible man in history depicted by marvelous works and mighty acts. He was a man of both works and words.

It's significant that Jesus clarifies for confused people. It's significant that Jesus confronts religious leaders because His actions would be indecipherable if they're not accompanied by His own divine interpretation of them.

[24 : 30] The passage before us tells us that He is one who bears witness to God through action and word. Therefore, we must pay attention to both His action and His speech, the contents of His teaching.

Verse 20, these are words He spoke in the treasury as He taught in the temple. He's actually been teaching since the beginning in verse 25.

He declares to the world what He has heard in verse 26. Jesus is the very Word of God or God's declaration to the world.

God's revelation and God's communication. Ultimately, I would assert that all that is bound up in this book from front to back is God, in the Scriptures, is God's very revelation to the world conjoined to His Son.

And for our passage this morning, Jesus declares something truthfully on all of humanity.

[25 : 40] Have you considered how you may want to die? How do you want to die? well, I want to die peacefully.

Given modern medicine and technologies, that is becoming more and more of a reality. Some of us will say, I want to die in my old age as I sleep, not tethered to an IV or medication.

I stumbled across a moving news article where a couple married over 80 years passed away on the same evening on two adjacent hospital beds holding hands.

It was a picture of love, they said. And generally speaking, we want to die in a way that avoids the most pain, the most suffering. We want to outlive our loved ones, possibly, and slip into the afterlife with the least amount of hardship.

hardship. But the reality is most of us will not die in this way. It doesn't take more than a few minutes. On the front page of any reliable news source to find the lives being lost in the most horrific and unjust ways, fleeing residents from war-stricken nations die as they run.

[27 : 00] Natural disasters turn villages into graveyards. In our own city, young boys and girls fall slain and all die all too soon.

And these are the realities of a broken world unable to secure deliverance from these unpreventable powers. And Jesus arrives and pronounces a stunning statement.

There are horrific ways to die. But there is one way to die that is the most supreme tragedy.

perhaps you caught it thrice, three times mentioned. It's not like Jesus is glossing over death. We'll see in a few chapters that Jesus himself laments over death in tears and in righteous fury.

But Jesus comes to us this morning and he says you can die in a million different ways but do everything you can to avoid dying in this one way.

[28 : 04] do not die in your sin. Do not die in your sins.

Do not die in your sins. How does he describe this? Well, I've been to these massive burial plots.

Not here in North America because they're not big enough. I've stood at plots in China where thousands and thousands of terracotta soldiers line up to guard the tomb of kings.

Buried with their gold and their treasure with even their loved ones who were still alive. I've been, well, I've seen and read about pyramids that house the burial plots of pharaohs with their treasures.

And something about humanity says we want to take the best that we have here and so when we enter in over there we have it all. And Jesus comes and he flips the entire thing and he says you can take whatever you want from here.

[29 : 26] But make sure you do not take your sin. Do not take your sin. You want to take your gold?

Well, let me tell you, one day I can show you streets made of gold. You can take your little treasure box, I'll show you cities of gold. You want to take your limited wealth?

Well, let me show you infinite wealth. But take heed. Jesus, by implication, makes clear that there is one thing, there is really only one thing you can take across from this life to the next.

It is not your success, not your security, not your strength, not your significance. It is your sin. This is the one condition you cannot pass into death in, unpardoned, unforgiven, unfit, to meet God.

The tragedy for John the writer in this passage is that the Jews passed on Jesus. Jesus had already told them, there is going to come a day and you are going to come looking.

[30 : 41] You are going to come looking for your deliverer, your Messiah, and you won't be able to find him. The entire nation would go on looking for their promised Savior, having passed on the sent Son who could save.

They would die in their sin looking for another. And this is, I think, the great deception of our day, is it not? Is Jesus really the best option?

I can do better than Jesus. Right? I can find a more lucrative offer, as if this is like a job search.

Right? I can find more satisfying love. I can find more substantive peace, maybe inside myself.

I will save myself. And Jesus wants to clarify for you this morning, you cannot do better. There is no greater offer. There is simply no other. He is exclusively the light.

[31 : 51] He comes on the scene and he does not say, I am a light of the world. I am the exclusive light. He is not a light on a string of Christmas lights.

He is the sun, the sole source of all light. His word is a pronouncement that deliberate unbelief will result in humanity perishing in their unbelief.

Denying the light results in dying in one's sin. And it would be morbid to end the sermon this way on such a note. For the text ends this morning with a glimmer of hope.

The possibility of belief. Despite difficulty and opposition and ominous words, belief resulted, at least in verse 30.

glory. And as we conclude, as you consider Jesus, as you think of his statement, who he is, what he's here for, and what he's saying, remember, I want to show you how beautiful the Lord is.

[33 : 06] because he, Jesus himself, is not only the bearer of this declaration that you can die in your sins, he is also the bearer of the guilt of your sins.

You will die in your sin, the Bible says. Jesus has died for your sin, the Bible says. He is the one who attests that there will come a day where he will be lifted up, according to verse 28, on a cross by those who interrogated him, and in so doing, it will become clear that he is who he said he was, namely the great I am, God himself.

When they thought they put to death this annoying man, it would turn out to be his crowning, his coronation. On the cross, God himself fulfilled the testimony of John the Baptist.

He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He is what that Samaritan village attested to, the Savior of the world. I have sent my Son, the Bible says, to complete this mission.

And in so doing, God declares John chapter 3, that he loves the world. I am the Lamb of God to save the world. I am the Savior of the entire world, of all who would come to him, because I do love the world.

[34 : 38] And the beauty of it is that Jesus died for your sins, so that you do not need to die in your sins. That is the offer, lucrative offer, unmatched.

who I am, why I'm here, what I am saying, the purpose, the person, the purpose, the proclamation of Jesus.

Let us pray together. Father, we come to you. let us not misunderstand and try to put words in your mouth, saying, oh, Jesus, no, no, no, you're just a light in the world.

No, no, no, I could do better. but Lord, let us take heed to your words, that you are the light of the world, that whoever comes to you and follows you will not walk in darkness.

And so, Father, I pray that you would be light to us, because you have not only be light to us, unveil our eyes, help us to see the Lord Jesus for who he is.

[36 : 15] We ask these things for his sake. Amen.