

Lent V

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[0:00] May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight. O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

! Please be seated. Our text this morning from which the sermon comes is the gospel reading in John chapter 8, verse 46-59a.

It's on page 1063 of your Pew Bible. You're welcome to open, in fact, encourage you to open your Pew Bible and follow along there if you're able to.

Actually, all the readings that we had this morning, both the Old Testament reading, the first lesson from Numbers, and the second lesson from Hebrews, are worthy of wonderful sermons in themselves.

And I thought maybe because you've missed me so much I should preach three separate sermons and we should be here for a few more hours. Then, no, no, no, that's a joke. But I decided we'll just look at John chapter 8 this morning.

[1:09] But as I said before, this is the Sunday commonly called Passion Sunday. As we, and I hope you've seen in all those texts, as a point, really, to the cross.

The Numbers passage foreshadows the cross of Jesus Christ. The one who was lifted up for the salvation of the world. The serpent, the bronze serpent, prefigures Christ himself, being the one who was lifted up on the cross.

Who becomes a curse for us. And Hebrews tells us, the author of Hebrews tells us, that that work that he did is more superior to the sacrifices of goats and bulls.

It is efficacious. It is once and for all. And it's accepted by God. And we look now in this gospel reading at Jesus' engaging the Pharisees.

Well, our consideration of the passion of our Lord. I want you to see that it's meaningless unless we believe the claims made about him.

[2:17] The suffering of Christ is not merely the tragic death of a good man. Nor simply the noble martyrdom of a prophet misunderstood by his age.

The passion of our Lord only becomes the salvation of the world if the one who suffers is who he claims to be. The God-man.

The eternal son made flesh. The one mediator between God and man. It is this claim, the claim Christ makes about himself.

Which the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testaments bear witness to. That stands before us in today's gospel reading. As the church prepares to enter the deepening reflections of Holy Week.

And turns our gaze towards the cross. The question before us. Before all of us this morning. Is not first, what happened to Jesus.

[3:17] But rather, who Jesus is. Who is Jesus. If we misunderstand who Christ is. Then the cross itself loses its meaning.

The world may admire Jesus as a moral teacher. Or respect him as a spiritual guide. But if that is all he is. Then his death cannot save us.

Only if he is truly God. And truly man. Only if he is the divine son come in the flesh. Can his suffering become the ransom for sinners that we desperately need.

And so today the gospel brings us into one of the most intense confrontations. Recorded in scripture. This is the confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees.

In the temple courts. Here the truth about Christ is revealed. And at the same time. The truth about Christ is violently rejected.

[4:22] As we see in the gospel reading. In the 8th chapter of John's gospel. Jesus is engaged in a dispute. A prolonged dispute actually. With the religious leaders of Israel.

These are not pagans. Or unbelievers in the ordinary sense. These are men who know the scriptures. These are men who teach the law. Who claim to be the faithful guardians. Of the covenant of God. Yet. Despite all their knowledge. They remain blind.

Willful blindness. They refuse to recognize. The one standing before them as the Messiah. The one upon whom all the hopes of Israel rest.

Is present among them. Stands before them. And yet they reject him. They have seen his works. It's not that they haven't seen it. They've seen his works. They've witnessed the signs that testify to his divine authority.

[5 : 26] The sick. They've seen the sick healed. They've seen the blind given sight. The hungry fed. We looked at. We saw that. In the last week's gospel reading.

The oppressed. Delivered from demonic bondage. They've seen it all. They've heard of it. These works were not hidden from them. They were performed openly.

Before their very eyes. Before the eyes of the people. And yet the Pharisees. Do not receive these works. As the testimony of God. Regarding his son.

Instead. What do they do? They do the most evil thing. They could think. They could surmise. They attribute the works of God. They attribute the works of God. To the devil.

Such is the death. Of human blindness. When their heart refuses. The truth. Rejects the truth. The same evidence.

[6 : 23] That should have led them. To faith. Instead. Becomes the reason. For deeper unbelief. In their hearts. And so. They cling. To their identity.

As the descendants. Of Abraham. They comfort themselves. With the thought. That they belong to God. Simply. Because Abraham. Is their father.

For Jesus. Exposes the emptiness. Of their claim. He says to them. If you were Abraham. Abraham's children. You would be doing.

The works. Abraham did. But now. You seek to kill me. A man. Who has told you. The truth. That I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did.

If you were Abraham's children. You will be doing. The works. Abraham did. And what is Abraham's true work? Abraham's true work. Was faith.

[7 : 22] Abraham believed. The promises of God. He trusted. The word of the Lord. Even when he could not see it. Even when he could not see. It will become fulfilled.

He trusted. The promises of God. But these men. Though they claim. Abraham as their father. Do not share. Abraham's faith.

And therefore. Jesus says something. Astonishing. Truly astonishing. Something that must have struck them. Like thunder. You. Are not Abraham's children. In fact.

You are doing the works. Of your true father. The works your true father did. And who is your true father? You. Are of the devil. The devil is your father.

This is not merely an insult. By Jesus. He is not just turning the. You know. You call me. A big head. I am going to call you a big head. That is not what is going on here.

[8 : 18] This is a deeper. Spiritual diagnosis. Jesus. Sees them. For who they are. And he is spiritually. Diagnosing them.

The devil is the father of lies. He hates the truth. And those who reject. The truth of God. Show. Whose likeness. They bear.

If you reject. The truth of God. Particularly the truth. Concerning Jesus Christ. Then you are showing. That you bear. The same semblance.

Of your father. The devil. Earlier in this same chapter. Of chapter 8. Jesus has said to them. If you abide in my word. You will know the truth.

And what would the truth do? The truth shall make you free. But they refuse that freedom. Instead they cling to the illusion.

[9 : 16] Of righteousness. Built upon their own works. And in doing so. They choose bondage. They choose slavery. To sin. For whenever men attempt.

To justify themselves. Before God. Whenever they trust. In their own righteousness. Rather than the mercy of God. They remain enslaved. And so Jesus presses the matter further.

Into this passage. Jesus asks them. Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth. Why do you not believe me? This is a remarkable question.

No prophet. In the Old Testament. Would have dared speak. In this way. Every servant of God. Knew himself to be a sinner. But Jesus challenges them.

To name a single sin. In his own life. But they cannot. There is only one reason. They reject him. The only reason they reject him.

[10 : 21] Is because he tells the truth. He tells the truth. Concerning who he is. He tells the truth. Concerning who God is. And he tells the truth. Concerning who they are.

Concerning who they are. And so he declares. Jesus does. Whoever is of God. Hears the words of God.

The reason you do not hear them. Is that you are not of God. Now that's a hard word. But it reveals something deeply important. That I want us to see this morning.

The ability to hear the word of God. Is itself a sign of belonging to God. The ability to hear the word of God.

Is itself a sign that you belong to God. If you are here this morning. And you hear the words of God. And the word of God convicts you. Pricks you. It is like a double-edged sword.

[11 : 19] That convicts you of your sin. Tells you of your unrighteousness. But also offers the hope of the gospel. To turn to Jesus Christ. And if you respond in faith. There is no greater sign.

There is no greater confirmation. That you are God's. Than that very fact. That you are made low. By God's word. Those whose hearts remain hardened.

Cannot hear. God's word. This is why Jesus so often says in the gospels. He who has ears to hear. Let him hear. Let him hear. And that same question.

Confronts every one of us this morning. Doesn't it? Do you have ears to hear Christ? Do you recognize his voice. In the scriptures? Do you receive him.

As the truth and the life. The only door. Through which sinners may enter. Into peace with God. Or does his word. Leave you unmoved.

[12 : 15] Let me say something. That may sound severe. But they are not my words. They are Christ's words. If a person remains indifferent. To the call of the gospel.

If the gracious invitation. Of God. Leaves their heart. Untouched. That indifference. May reveal. That they are still standing.

Outside the kingdom. Rather than inside. But here is the good news. The door of mercy. Is still open.

The ark of salvation. Has not yet been shut. Even now. The voice of Christ. Calls sinners to himself. Even now.

The invitation stands. For we must not follow. The path of the Pharisees. Who harden their hearts. Against the truth of God's word.

[13 : 11] We must respond. In faith. We must be. True. The true children of Abraham. We must respond. In faith. Now.

How do they respond. To Jesus' words. They don't respond. With repentance. They do not respond. With humility. Instead. They answer. With insults.

They say to Jesus. Are we not right. In saying. That you are a Samaritan. And have a demon. Now. In their eyes. The few insults.

Could be greater. Few insults. Could be greater. Than to call someone. A Samaritan. Because to call Jesus. A Samaritan. Is actually. To place him.

Outside the covenant. People of God. And it was to brand. The greatest insider. Of all. Jesus Christ. To brand him. As an outsider.

[14 : 06] To brand him. As a religious imposter. And then they had. To the charge. Of Jesus being a Samaritan. They say. Well you are possessed. By a demon. Notice how Jesus responds.

To these two charges. First of all. Notice that he does not. Defend himself. Against the insult. Of being a Samaritan. Because in a sense. He is not ashamed. To be identified.

With the despised. And the rejected. He is not ashamed. To be identified. With the Samaritan. He is not ashamed. To be identified. With you. A Gentile. In fact.

That is the reason he came. To be identified. With us. The salvation he brings. Will not be limited. To the house of Israel alone. The salvation he brings.

Will be extended. To every nation. And every tribe. And every tongue. So he doesn't bother. To defend against. Against the charge. Of being a Samaritan. But he firmly denies.

[15:03] The accusation. Of demonic possession. Jesus says to them. I do not have a demon. But I honor my father. And you dishonor me. Then he adds this.

Yet I do not seek. My own glory. There is one. Who seeks it. And he is the judge. Here again. We see the heart.

Of Christ's mission. He does not seek. The praise of men. Everything he does. Is directed. Towards honoring. The father. And this stands.

In sharp contrast. To the Pharisees. Who loved. As Jesus already. Accused them of. They loved. The admiration of crowds. They performed. Their religious acts. In public.

So that others. Might see them. And praise them. But as our Lord. Teaches elsewhere. Those who seek. The praise of men. Have already received. What? Their reward.

[15:59] But God. The true judge. He sees the heart. He rejects. The prayer. Of the man. Who boasts. Before him. In self-righteous pride. But yet.

He welcomes. The sinner. Who comes with humility. Who kneels before him. With a broken spirit. And trust. In his mercy alone. He sees the heart.

And so. In the midst. Of these accusations. And insults. Jesus remains calm. He does not return slander. With slander. He does not lash out.

In anger. Instead. He entrusts. Himself. To the father. The apostle Peter. Later. Reflects on this. When he writes of Christ.

When he was reviled. He did not revile. In return. When he suffered. He did not threaten. But continued. In trusting himself. To him. Who judges rightly.

[16:56] This is not merely. A description. Of Christ's character. It is also an example. For us. As followers. The world. As always. Loved lies. More than truth.

And those who belong to Christ. Will sometimes. Find themselves. Misunderstood. Like our Lord was. They will find themselves. Marked. And they will find themselves.

Forcely accused. Do you find that. To be true. As a follower. Of Jesus Christ. You will be misunderstood. At times. You will be mocked.

You will be forcibly accused. But when that happens. The temptation. Is to defend ourselves. With anger. And bitterness. But the way of Christ.

Is different. The way of Christ. Is to entrust ourselves. To God. Our Father. And the judge. The way of Christ.

[17:52] Is to seek. His glory. Rather than our own. And to trust. That he will vindicate us. As we remain faithful. To the truth.

Even when that truth. Brings suffering. That is the way of Christ. Even in the face. Of such hostility. Jesus continues.

To extend the offer. Of the gospel. To these Pharisees. He says to them. Truly. Truly. I say to you. If anyone keeps my word.

You will never see death. Reflect on that phrase. That promise of God. To you. And to me.

And to them. Truly. Truly. I say to you. If anyone keeps my word. You will never see death. To keep Christ's word.

[18:47] Means more than. Simply. Simply. Hearing it. It means. Receiving it. With faith. And holding fast to it. And shaping our lives.

By it. That's what it means. To keep his word. Receive it with faith. Hold fast to it. And shape your lives. By it. And this.

Jesus says. Is the path. To eternal life. It is the only rescue. From eternal spiritual death. That is on offer for us. For the believer.

Physical death. Is not the end. It is the doorway. Into glory. But the Pharisees respond. Even now. They still respond. With unbelief.

With disbelief. They say. To Jesus. 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.

[19:44] Instead of gripping. That word of promise. And holding fast to it. Believing it by faith. Holding fast to it. Shipping their lives around it. They further disbelieve. They ask him.

Are you greater than our father Abraham? Now they understand. That Jesus is making an extraordinary claim. In what Jesus says. They understand.

That he is presenting himself. As the mediator. Of a promise. Greater than anything. Abraham received. But their minds. Remain confined.

To the darkened world. That is destined for destruction. In its unbelief. They cannot see. Beyond the limits. Of this earthly life.

This spiritual sight. Is darkened. And so. What they fail to understand. Is that the one standing before them. Is not merely another teacher.

[20 : 40] Or another prophet. They fail to see that he is the God. Whom Abraham himself worships. The same Lord who called Abraham.

Out of the Chaldeans. The same Lord who spoke to Moses. From the burning bush. Stands before them. The same Lord who delivered Israel from Egypt. And now he has come to them.

And to us. In humility. Clothed in human flesh. To accomplish a greater deliverance. He has come to rescue sinners.

From the deeper bondage of sin and death. And he will accomplish this rescue. Through his own sacrifice. The sacrifice of his own body. And blood. The shedding of his blood.

The path before Jesus. Leads to the cross. But that path of humiliation. Will become the path of glory. For him.

[21 : 38] And for all who follows. In his train. For as Jesus says. If I glorify myself. My glory is nothing. It is my father who glorifies me.

The father will glorify the son. Because the son walks. The path of perfect obedience. The path that we could not. We could not follow in that path.

He's walked that path for us. And through that obedience. His obedience. He becomes. Both our righteousness. And our sacrifice. He's the spotless lamb of God.

Who takes away the sin. Of the world. And Jesus says something astonishing. Your father Abraham. Rejoiced.

That he will see my day. He saw it. He saw it by faith. And was glad. In other words. Abraham looked forward.

[22 : 40] In faith. To the coming of the Messiah. The promises given to him. Pointed forward. To Christ. Abraham believed.

These promises of God. And rejoiced in them. But the Pharisees cannot comprehend. What Jesus is saying. They respond with mockery.

You are not yet 50 years old. And have you seen Abraham? They think. Jesus' words absurd. But Jesus doesn't suffer.

His claim. Instead. He further. He digs. Further in. He reveals the truth. In unmistakable language. He says to them. Truly.

By the way. When Jesus says truly. Truly. Honin. When you read in the Gospels. There's something worthy of your hearing there. Jesus says. Truly. Truly.

[23 : 35] I say to you. Before Abraham was. I am. This is the climax.

Of this entire passage. Jesus does not simply claim. That he existed before Abraham. That's not what he's saying here. He uses the divine name. I am.

The name by which God reveals himself. To Moses. At the burning bush. I am. In the Greek. The words are. Ego e me. The same name is used throughout scripture.

To identify the eternal God. Jesus now appropriates. Rightly. This name. Jesus is declaring. That he shares the very identity of God himself.

That's what he's saying to these Pharisees. That's what he's saying to us. He's saying. He is the eternal word. Who was with God in the beginning. That indeed he is God.

[24 : 34] God. And at this point. At this point. The reaction of the Pharisees. Is immediate. What do they do? Because they understood what Jesus is saying.

They pick up stones. To throw at him. Why? Because they understand exactly. What he's claiming. To their ears.

This is blasphemy. Here is Jesus. Placing himself. On equal footing. With God. And for this reason. They believe he deserves to die.

And he would deserve to die. If he was. If he were. If he were a mere man. Making this claim. But they would not succeed. In killing him that day. As.

John tells us. But that charge. That charge. They will bring later. Against him. That. Charge. Of blasphemy. Will eventually lead.

[25 : 36] To him being condemned. On the cross. So when Jesus stands. Before the high priest. During his trial. The accusation. Will again. Be the same. He claimed.

To be the son of God. Therefore. Equal with God. That's for. He deserves to die. Thus the gospel. Appointed for us. This.

This passion. Sunday. Prepares us. For what lies ahead. In holy week. The cross. Is not merely. The result. Of political intrigue.

Or human misunderstanding. The cross. Is the result. Of humanity's. Rejection. Of the divine son. The light. Came into the world.

John tells us. And men loved. Darkness. Rather than light. And so the question. That confronted. The Pharisees.

[26 : 29] Confronts us. As well. This morning. Who is Jesus? Is he merely. A teacher? A prophet? Is he merely.

A moral example? Or is he. What the scriptures. Declares him to be. God incarnate. Emmanuel. God with us.

The savior. And redeemer. Of the world. Now. Everything. Depends. On the answer. You give. To that question. Who. Is Jesus?

Jesus. For if Jesus. Is truly God. And truly man. Then his death. Becomes the full. Perfect. And sufficient.

Sacrifice. For the sins. Of the whole world. And if that is true. Then there is no other hope. Of salvation. Apart from him. Therefore.

[27 : 26] The call of the gospel. Is clear. It's clear. Crystal clear. If you have never trusted Christ. The invitation still stands.

The door of mercy. Remains open. The one who created you. Is the one who came to redeem you. And invite you to come. To repent of your sin.

To trust. In his saving work. And to receive the life. That he alone can give. And if you already belong to Christ.

If you received him by faith. Entrusted your life. Your old self. To him. Trusting in his finished work. On the cross. Then you are called.

To continue. To continue. To walk humbly. Before him. You see. The proper response. To the revelation of Christ's glory. Is not pride.

[28 : 23] It's never pride. It's humility. It is to humble ourselves. Before him. To confess with our lives. That he is truly.

That he truly is the Lord. To confess with our old self. That he is. I am. And he has come.

To rescue. To save. To deliver. I hope that is our confession. This morning. As we turn our gaze.

To holy week. And to the cross. That we know who Christ is. We know who our redeemer is. And we have entrusted ourselves.

Body and soul. To his gracious keeping. Let us pray. We beseech you almighty God.

[29 : 23] Mercifully to look upon your people. That by your great goodness. We may be governed. And preserved evermore. Both.

In body and soul. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. You. Let us pray. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.