

THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

JUDICA

Study Notes for the Christian Layperson

by: Rev. Weslie Odom



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John 8:46-59 ESV

Author and Date:

The Apostle John, the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 13:23), receives these words from the Holy Spirit around AD 90. The text relates Christ Jesus' convincing proofs of His divinity to the Jews in the Temple, who seek all the more to kill Him.

⁴⁶ Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?

- Jesus here proves His innocence in the face of His persecutors. This reminds us of Pontius Pilate's declaration of guiltlessness on Good Friday. See also 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Hebrews 4:15.

⁴⁷ Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

- Jesus cuts to the heart of the matter: faith and unbelief. He is preaching very stern Law to the Jews. Perhaps some who hear these words of Jesus repent and believe as they had earlier in this chapter, but many harden their hearts at these words and the words to follow. Those who refuse to hear the Word of God are not of God. Blessed, rather, are those who hear the Word of God and keep it. This brings to remembrance the explanation of the 3rd Commandment from the Small Catechism, which teaches that we are to fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and the Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.

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."

- The Jews' response to Jesus words here is very similar to the response in the Gospel reading from Oculi Sunday, wherein Jesus exorcises a demon and the claim is that it's done by the power of Beelzebub. Jesus teaches that His works are in accord with the will of the Father. To dishonor Jesus is to dishonor the Father. Jesus' desire is to honor the Father, not glorify Himself. Jesus will be glorified by the Father, but it will be in a way contrary to the wisdom of the world as He is lifted up on the cross to atone for the sins of the world. Jesus, because He is God, desires all men to turn from their wicked ways and believe in His word. The result of this is rescue from sin, death, and the Devil.

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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?”

- Amazingly, the Jews respond to Jesus’ calm words with rage. They understand, it seems, precisely what Jesus is claiming about Himself. “Who do you make yourself out to be?” This is an excellent question for Christians to ponder. It’s one Jesus asks the disciples (Matthew 16:15; Mark 8:29), and is one that has a clear answer in Holy Scripture: Jesus is the Son of God and the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.

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.

- Again, Jesus confesses His divinity when He confesses that the Father in heaven is His Father. This section from John 8 is an excellent, clear portion of Scripture to remember when some claim that Jesus never called Himself God. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that those who refuse to hear will not hear.

⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.”

- Jesus is speaking to the Jews as sons of Abraham according to the flesh. In verse 47, He has clearly shown that they are not sons of Abraham according to faith.

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.

- To ears used to hearing the Old Testament, Jesus use of the name “I am” is very clearly a confession of His deity. This recalls the pre-incarnate Christ’s words to Moses at the burning bush when asked the name of the God whom He was going to the Israelites on behalf of. Genesis 3:14-15 records the following: “God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.”
- That they Jews understand that Jesus is calling Himself God is quite evident in their response in verse 59.

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