

In Nomine Jesu

If One Keeps the Words of Me, He Will Not See Death Into the Aeon

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Have you ever thought of how patient Jesus is? Just imagine Jesus in our text for today. He's trying so hard to save these stubborn hardheaded Pharisees. He's trying to wake them up, and get them to realize the truth that is standing in front of them. He's trying to tear them away from the lies that they have built up around themselves. But how do they respond? They try to kill Him.

In our text for today, Jesus is yet again in an argument with the Pharisees. After all, these are the best catechized and most Scripture-trained laymen living in that era. They still think that they can somehow outsmart Him. They think they can figure out a way to prove that He is not from God. And if they can't do that, they are going to try and discredit Him.

But Jesus will have none of it. He will not allow these hypocrites to rule over Him and God in that way. And He's certainly not going to allow them to kill Him before it is time.

The Pharisees, on the other hand, still think they can win. To a certain extent, we can understand why they are so outraged. Directly before our reading for today Jesus says this about the Pharisees, "*You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is not truth in him.*"¹

¹ John 8:44a (ESV)

Again I ask, do you consider the patience that Jesus has? These are the people that He had to deal with. Realize also, that once you were like them, and that sometimes you are still as stubborn as those Pharisees. But even though Jesus is God, He did not judge them or you. However there is One who judges them, and it is the very same God that they claim to be following. Listen as our text begins.

*Who from among you convicts Me concerning sin? If truth I speak, because of what do you not believe in Me?*²

The Latin name for this the fifth Sunday in Lent, is Judica, which in English is translated as a command to judge. With this verse we see that the Pharisees think they are in a position to judge Jesus. And if they had been honestly judging Him, using the Scriptures as the Word was intended, they could only have come to the conclusion that Jesus is who He says He is. But they weren't interested in vindicating or justifying Jesus. They weren't trying to declare him innocent, or even to try and find out the truth like any good judge would. They were only interested in convicting him. Our reading continues:

*The ones who are of God, the words of God hear, because of this you do not hear, you are not from God.*³

This slap to the Pharisees faces isn't as surprising when you remember that Jesus had just called them sons of the devil. Here, Jesus clearly states that the only ones who can truly hear the words of God, are those who are of God. Now this raises the question, how do you know that you are of God?

² John 8:46

³ John 8:47

Well, John writes quite a bit about this in his first letter. So if you want a more in depth answer read 1 John. (It's only five chapters long.) But to summarize, if a person believes Jesus at His Word, then that person is of God.

The Pharisees, for the most part, do not believe Jesus. Therefore they cannot hear the Words that God is trying to speak to them, because they are determined to not believe in the One whom those words are about. I would not suggest following in their footsteps. As you are about to hear, they prove their disbelief by what they say next.

The Jews cried out and said to Him, "Do we not rightly say that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?"⁴

You see how petty they are. They can't win the argument. As you know, no one wins an argument against Jesus. So they turn to insults, which, of course, just goes to show you how defeated they were. But to call someone a Samaritan was tantamount to calling Jesus a half-breed, and was also an insult to His parents. (The Pharisees would have thought they were insulting His mother, Mary, and His father Joseph. They probably did not realize they just insulted the Father, their own God as well.)

They also say that He has a demon. This one is likely them trying to discredit what He said. But again, Jesus speaks only that which the Father gives Him to speak. So by the Pharisees saying that Jesus had a demon, and implying that His words were coming from that demon, they also just called the Father a demon. Therefore, Jesus gives them a harsh reprimand. He vindicates both the Word and Father.

⁴ John 8:48

Jesus responded, "I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor Me. But I do not seek the glory of Me. He is the one seeking and judging."⁵

Jesus gives three short simple responses that should have made the Pharisees quake in fear. First, *"I do not have a demon."* If Jesus did not have a demon, then that could only mean that it was the Father giving Him His words as He claims. Second, *"I honor my Father."* Jesus always gives glory to the Father, and always honors Him. He honors the Father when He speaks the words that His Father has given him. Third, *"You dishonor me."* God blesses those who bless His followers. He curses those who curse His followers. How much more so do you think that He will do for His Son? Honestly, the Pharisees should already be flat on their faces and cowering in fear.

But Jesus isn't done yet. He continues, saying, *"I do not seek the glory of Me. He is the one seeking and judging."* To paraphrase this a little bit, 'Jesus does not defend His own honor. The Father will seek and judge those who dishonor Jesus.'

Now, let me put this another way. Jesus just handed them over to the Father to be judged. Jesus is the one whose hands you want to be in when the Judge comes. Jesus is the one who took our judgment on Himself, and therefore it is only by being in Him that we avoid the judgment of the Father.

Basically, Jesus just excommunicated the Pharisees through His threefold response. But like all excommunications, Jesus does not leave the

⁵ John 8:49-50

Pharisees without hope, even if they are going to ignore it. So He continues.

Truly, truly, I say to you, if one keeps the words of Me, he shall certainly not see death into the aeon?⁶

As frustrating as the Pharisees could be, they weren't dead yet. They weren't yet condemned for eternity. Jesus wants them to be saved. So He reminds them what has to happen in order for them to be saved. They have to hear His words and believe, or keep, them. Because, remember to hear Jesus is to hear the Father. If they do that, then they will not see death into the aeon. They will not die eternally. Their response indicates that they either completely missed the point or completely ignore it; probably both.

The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, also the prophets, even so you say, 'If one keeps my words, they shall certainly not taste death into the aeon.' You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died, also the prophets died. Who do you make yourself to be?"⁷

As I said, the Jews completely missed the point. Then they proceeded to misquote Jesus. Jesus said that the one who keeps His words wouldn't see death into the aeon. The Jews had said that he said, 'wouldn't taste death into the aeon.' This is a small difference, but a difference still. When Jesus said this, what He was saying is that the one who kept His words wouldn't suffer the second eternal death. The Jews thought He meant that they wouldn't die at all.

They then go on with this erroneous assumption, and start trying to build a case based off of it. After all, Abraham and the prophets, the

⁶ John 8:51

⁷ John 8:52-53

greatest men in these Jews' minds, had suffered death. Therefore, Jesus must have a demon. Or at least that's what they'd like people to believe. Jesus does not rise to their taunt though.

*Jesus responded, "If I glorify Myself, the glory of Me is nothing. The Father is the One glorifying Me, whom you say, 'That God is ours.' Even so, you do not know Him, but I know Him. And if I said that I do not know Him, I would make Myself like you, liars, but I do know Him and the word of Him I keep. Abraham the father of you exulted that he beheld the day of Me, and he saw and rejoiced."*⁸

Jesus proceeds to again point them to the Father, the very one who they claim to worship. He points out again, that it is the words of the Father that He is keeping and proclaiming. Since they decided to bring up Abraham after that, Jesus gives them a little nugget of information. Abraham had indeed seen the day of Jesus, and he had exulted and rejoiced. But alas, yet again, the third time, the Jews miss the point and get caught up on the details.

*Then the Jews said to Him, "Fifty years not yet you have and you have seen Abraham?"*⁹

They just don't get it. They can't get it. They are refusing to listen to the Words of Jesus, and therefore they are falling farther and farther away from Him. They are so confident of their own standing before the Father, that they can't imagine that they might actually be wrong. They think that they are the judges. They will not listen to anyone else's teachings but their own. That was true even when that teaching is coming from the mouth of

⁸ John 8:54-56

⁹ John 8:57

God Himself. Jesus tries one last, almost desperate attempt, to try to get them to open their ears. He states who He is.

Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham became, I am."¹⁰

Jesus declared His divinity to these Jews. He reveals Himself as the One that they claim to worship. He reveals to them why He can know all of the things that He has been saying to them. He reveals to them one of the most wonderful mysteries of Himself, the Incarnation, God made flesh. And what is their response?

Then they took up stones in order to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out from the temple.¹¹

Jesus just revealed one of the mysteries of God to these Jews. He revealed that the Word had become flesh and dwelt among sinners. Their response is to try and kill Him. This is the unbelievers' response to the Word of God. They try to kill Him.

This is what the devil is trying to get all humans to do. He wants all humans to have this violent reaction against the Word. He knows that if they start listening, if they begin believing the words they hear, they will be saved.

Once in the past, you were just like those Pharisees. You were once so ingrained in your sin and the old Adam that you just would not listen to the Word. Thanks be to God that at some point, He broke through your stubbornness. For some of you, that was in baptism not long after you were born. For others, it was later in life. But no matter when it happened, the

¹⁰ John 8:58

¹¹ John 8:59

result is the same. Even when you return to not trusting, the Word is still there to call you back to repentance and belief. He proves that you are vindicated in believing Him, because He will forgive you no matter how much you struggle with your old Adam.

You are now of God. He is not hiding Himself from you. Thanks be to the Word incarnate, Who fought you and defeated you and your sinful nature. Praise be to Him who rather than judging you, took pity on you and died for you. Glory be to Him who was more stubborn than you, and ensured that you would keep His Word and would not see that second eternal death.

Now may the peace which passes all understanding, and which comes from the Word of God, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Lent 5 (Judica), March 22, 2015
Psalm 43; Genesis 22:1-14; Hebrews 9:11-15; John 8:46-59

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Soli Deo Gloria