

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Fully Alive

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TITLE

You Will Never See Death

SCRIPTURE

John 8:48-59



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Well, it is good to ya and I wanna ask you to turn with me to John chapter 8. We are gonna finish up this story, we've actually been in this story ever since John chapter 7 verse 1, these few days at the Feast of Booths. But if you're a guest with us, we're glad you're here in John chapter 8, if you brought a Bible. If you didn't there should be one in a seat near you and if you don't have one at home, please take that home as a gift. We would love for you to have that. It's important for you to understand why John wrote what he wrote 'cause it's very different than Mathew, Mark and Luke in terms of their intent. Okay? Those three men, they all wrote with the intent to give us a synopsis of the life of Jesus. And so it starts with his birth and sort of moves forward and John intentionally chose not to do that. And so there are things in John that you might be surprised that, "Gosh, how come they didn't put that in John?"

But what John's doing is 50 years after the fact. He's sitting down and he says that, "Christ has done more than could ever be actually be recorded and written down. And what I'm write down is with this specific intent and that is that for the people that will read what I'm about to write, these selected stories from what Jesus said and from Jesus did on the Earth is that they're gonna conclude if they believe this that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing in him they're gonna have life in his name." This is his central passion, this is what he's after in every single story. And so there are enormous stories where he gives one sentence to and then there are stories like this one, that if you think about the entire Book of John, is 21 chapters and he gives two chapters to a specific ongoing conversation at the Feast of Booths. And that's what we find here in 7 and 8, okay?

So even before we read it though, I wanna pray and ask the Lord to be our teacher. So join me. Father, we come to your word and we believe it's true and yet our hearts when we read this book so often finds excuses not to apply and not to feel impressed and not to admire what we see. And so I pray that you would do a miracle and that you would speak through weakness and you would speak through distraction and help us to understand to believe and to amazed at the person of Jesus that we read about here in John chapter 8. We need your help. I pray in Christ's name. Amen. Well, at the end of John chapter 8, the tension between Jesus and the Jews literally reaches a boiling point, okay? You know, in fact if you've been here the last several weeks, you could probably tell me this. I hope you could tell me this, what is the Feast of Booths, right? Once a year, for one week long, they obeyed God by flocking back to Jerusalem, all these Jews, flocked back in order to celebrate God's provision to the people of Israel, their forefathers, when they marched through the wilderness for 40 years.

All the things that God did for them during that time, this generation, they're looking back and celebrating and so they're camping. The Feast of Booths is literally tents, booths was a tent. So you got all these people, they're all flocking to the city. Well, Jesus comes halfway through but it's interesting that John, the writer, 50 years later, he tells this in John chapter 7 verse 1 that Jesus didn't go around Judea, which is where Jerusalem was at, because the Jews were seeking to kill him.

And yet we find that he makes it halfway through the feast and he's literally doing exactly what John said, is he's sort of ... Well, there's a lot of tension that's brewing and it's interesting that the very last thing that we read in John chapter 8 that culminates the story, it's the final period is they are picking up rocks in order to stone him to death and he escapes and he leaves Jerusalem.

So you and I have to ask this question and that is, why did he go to Jerusalem? If the story starts with he didn't go there because they wanted to kill him and it ends with them trying to kill him then why would he go there? And the answer is love. It's because he loves and so he rushes into dark places with light in order to help people who are trapped in the darkness. You see, what's really happening is Jesus is literally coming to the hospital bed with a cure for their spiritual cancer and even though they yell at him and even though they thrash around in the bed, even though they threaten to throw things at him, is Jesus is hoping that they're gonna receive his cure of eternal life. He loves too much not to go to Jerusalem. And so during this time, it's really fascinating how the tension continues to percolate all the way to where we get to where we're at today, the very last one, where literally the water is boiling.

He's already said I'm the light of the world. He already says that if you don't believe in me that you're gonna die in your sin. He's already told them if you abide of my word you're truly my disciples and you'll know the truth and the truth'll set you free. He's already said to the people that unless you believe you'll die in your sins and verse 47 says, "Whoever is of God, hears the words of God and the reason why you do not hear them is because you are not of God." And that's where we get to our text and this is what it says, "So the Jews answered him, 'Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?' Jesus answered, 'I do not have a demon but I honor my father and you dishonor me. Yet I do not seek my own glory. There is one who seeks it and he is the judge. Truly, truly I say to you, if anyone keeps my word he will never see death.' But the Jews said to him, 'Now we know that you a demon. For Abraham died as did the prophets yet you say if anyone keeps my word he will never taste death. Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died, who do you make yourself out to be?'"

And 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 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. Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.' So the Jews said to him, 'You are not 50 years old and have you seen Abraham?'" And Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you before Abraham was, I am.' So they picked up stones to throw at him but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple." Now if you're reading this and if you've not read the rest of the chapter before that it may look like Jesus, gosh, he's saying some pretty harsh things and what you have to understand is that Jesus is the potter and these people are the clay and the harder the clay the more pressure must be applied in order to form these people into whom God wants them to be.

And so what I wanna show you there as we get ready for the Lord's Supper is I wanna show you three things about Jesus that literally, again, I say this every week and it's 'cause I believe it is that if you apply and believe these things to your life, it will change the way that you live. It will transform your life and it will change my life. The first thing we learn here about Jesus is Jesus humbly plead with arrogant people. He humbly plead with arrogant people. I want you to just notice how the whole story starts, what are the first words? They say are we not right? Sounds like a teenager, doesn't it? Are we not right? You're in the wrong, we're in the right. Now sometimes it really helps to take a step away from the wall to appreciate the painting that's hung upon it.

Like I don't know if you've ever been in an art gallery but if you had to go into one and you had paintings all over the wall and they had those stanchions and the ropes to where literally you had to walk to where you're belly was literally scrubbing the wall, right, and there's a painting right in front of you. You just can't step back and if you had these great big paintings, you probably are gonna lose perspective of exactly what you're seeing. It might look something like this, okay, to where you look at this painting, you're like, "Wow, that's amazing. I had no idea what that's connected to but man, that's a really cool paint. I'm not sure what that is." But if you're given the opportunity to step back, all of a sudden you see that this is connected to one of most famous paintings that Van Gogh did, right? Starry Night. And the same thing is happening here.

You see, it's almost unfair to stop where we stopped last week and just to start back in because the context is, are we not right in saying that you're a demon possessed Samaritan? And all the rest of us like, "Well, I don't really know what either of those things are but I don't know who's right." And so what I wanna encourage you to do is just to take a step back and if you'll take a step back here in your mind and envision something, you're gonna see the absurdity of what is happening right here in this text. You see, before Jesus was on the Earth, Jesus existed in heaven forever. He's the eternal second person of the Trinity, the Christ, the Son of God. And in heaven, Jesus himself, Christ, was on a throne in heaven receiving the undiluted worship and admiration of every holy thing for all time. And then all of a sudden, at a point in time, heaven hushed when Christ stood from his throne he took off his kingly garments and he put on garments of a servant.

And then all of a sudden, God the father, sends not just angels, he sends archangels and he deploys them to the Earth to specific people with a specific message and that message is, it's time. That the promise that God made in the garden when mankind sinned and broke fellowship with him, that he would one day send the Messiah, the Christ from heaven to Earth in order to make all things new. The angels were sent to specific people to say, "It's time. He's coming." And all of a sudden, Christ in heaven, he selects poor, humble people to become his family and poor, humble people to become his followers. And now, Jesus Christ is standing not just on the Earth, he's standing in the middle of the temple that was architecturally designed to point people and remind people to the Messiah that was coming. Literally every piece of the furniture in the temple, every part of the temple was created and designed in order to draw people's attention to the hope that one say Jesus or Christ is coming to rescue us, the Messiah.

And now he is standing right in the middle of the temple that was designed for everyone to look and admire him, he's here and instead of admiration, they go with self justification. Aren't we right? This is the clay talking to the potter. Are we not right? And then what they're asking him to confirm is an insult, a racial slur. Aren't we right in saying that you are a demon possessed Samaritan? You see, a Samaritan was a Jewish person that had literally become unfaithful and married a Gentile person and they had their children, they were Samaritan children and the Jews despised them, they hated them. They were the other people, the other race, the inferior. So when they say aren't we right in saying that you're a demon possessed Samaritan? These people who were plagued by commonalities just like you and me, weak and frail and sinful, they looked at the perfect Son of God and what they're saying is, are we right to say that you are a worthless, dirty, half breed, conceived by a loose woman?

Aren't we right in concluding that you are the Petri dish of Satan's evil experiments? That you are the playground in which Satan loves to play? And without a hint of anger or retaliation, Jesus says, "I don't need to defend myself here. Even though you dishonor me. For my father who is not just the judge but he's gonna be your judge, is absolutely committed to my honor. He will settle this for he's always right." See, when you look at just those few sentences, you see a glory in Jesus that literally you cannot invent. Jesus is humble and it would pay us huge dividends as a people for us to consider the mystery of Jesus' humility. I want you to think about this for a second, all right? No man has ever invented a humble God. No collection of men have ever gathered together and say, "You know what? Let's create this kind of a God," and they invented a God who humbles himself, takes on the form of a servant, washes people's feet and dies for the people who scorned him. No man has ever come up with something like this.

You see, the fact is that you and I and every other human on the world were so caught up in ourself that we would never invent a God who isn't. You see, either God creates us in his image or we create God in our image. And when we reject who he is then we end up having to create something because there's just an internal mechanism within us that knows that there's a supernatural in the world and so when we don't know who that is because we've turned our back on him, what happens is we start to invent and that's why there's all these religions. That's why there's all these man made Gods, that's why there's idols literally all over India, all over Africa. People are literally bowing down to things. Now, what do we create? We always created glorified us. Well, if we're confident in ourself, if we're proud people then what we create is a supercharged proud God. And this is exactly what you see throughout history, this is what you see throughout the entire world.

No God is humble except for Jesus and Jesus came to the Earth and Jesus says in Matthew chapter 11 verse 28, "Learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart. Learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart." You see, each one of us, whether we like it or not, our sinful nature has marred our personality so much that we just think about ourself a lot. In spite of every amount of evidence in the world for us not to be amazed or to think or to be super self conscious, supercharged in ourself, we just are. And there's this spectrum of how that works sort of depending on our level of pride and the challenges that we face in the world.

See, that spectrum looks like this, there's some people and there's self hatred. They hate themselves, they look in the mirror and they don't like what they see. They don't like what they've done. They don't think they can do anything else. And yet they're so self hatred, meaning there's still so full of self that all they can think about is themselves.

They may spend all their time hating themselves and downplaying themselves and doubting themselves but they're still just thinking about self. You move from self hatred to self pity and self pity is someone that's absolutely convinced of their merit and worth and yet they're surprised that they're going through hard things. It's still arrogance, it's still pride that comes in and says, "I have to suffer? I have to wait? I shouldn't have to wait. So I'm gonna pity myself and you should pity me too 'cause look how bad I have it in spite of how good I am." So we go from self hatred to self pity and the third is self infatuation. That's where we just love to think about ourselves. For many of us, we don't hate ourselves and we don't spend all of our time in self pity but we still think about ourselves all the time. So we talk about my dreams and my hopes and my and my and we buy iPods and iPhones and I and I and I and everything's just I. Just say it, it's all about me, everything's about me.

But it's not about me. And then some people take it to the next level. Some people make a career out of it. Some people just splash upon it and that's self exaltation. That's where we're just so infatuated with ourselves that we just assume you should be infatuated with me as well so let me just exalt myself in front of you and you just echo. You just echo what I say about me. And you see, we're all on the spectrum somewhere but what you have to understand is this, is wherever we're at on the spectrum, it's influencing how we think of God and how we think of other people. And so here we are, we're followers of Christ in a world that is increasingly at odds with Christ. So how are we gonna respond? We see if you are a self hater or self pity or self infatuated or self exaltation and you get into one of these situations that you're following Jesus into, you may end up in one of these situations yourself if you happen to follow the one who went there.

What are you gonna do when someone insults you? If you're so full of yourself of perhaps self pity, all of sudden you may respond in a way to where you think, you know what? This is true. Yeah, I should retreat, I'm terrible, I'm a horrible person. You see, it's only the most humble that can literally receive an insult and continue moving because they recognize that my approval has been established with God Almighty. And because my approval has been established with the God Almighty I can love you as you need me to love you. And this is one of the truths that's so hard for us as people, is because we so desperately want other people to like us that it literally hinders our ability to love them as they need. So there's people in the world today that we're gonna run across and that we're gonna have the impulse, should I share the Gospel with this person? And you're gonna have the thought, well, what if they don't approve of me after I do this? And you're gonna have to make that decision right then, do I care more about this person's approval or am I established in God's approval and because I'm established in God's approval I can literally love this person at the point of their need just like Jesus?

You see, the humility that we see here in Jesus is absolutely remarkable. It's stunning when you think who it is that they're saying this to. Well, the second thing I want you see about Jesus is that Jesus promised life to dying people, all right? So the first, he humbly plead with arrogant people and then all of sudden what we find is he turns a corner and he's promising life to dying people. He gives no warning whatsoever, he just starts and he says, "Truly, truly, I say to you if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." Now this is amazing. Jesus is literally, in the passage before him, he went up to a prison cell called sin and he shook it and he said, "If anyone abides in me, I will set you free. I can free you from this." And now all of sudden, right on the heels of a personal insult, he comes and instead of insulting them back he gives them an invitation of eternal life. This is mercy, such mercy. All of a sudden, he comes and he starts shaking these prison bars, bars that you and I are behind.

And the bars that he shakes are death. He talks about this idea of something that every single one of us in this room is terrified about. And it doesn't matter how old you are or young or healthy, the fact is none of us like to talk about our own death. It's not a pleasant experience and Jesus knows this, he knows that internal paleness that sets into our heart and mind when we see a body in a casket. It's an unsettling thing, it's uncomfortable. We wanna close the lid, we wanna turn away, he don't want to look at that. It reminds us too much about who we are and our destiny, that one day, that's gonna take place if I live long enough, that's gonna be where I'm at and Jesus knows that these people, that is their path as well. And so Jesus, right on the heels of insult he says, "If you build your life upon my word, you will never see death." There's a big difference between you will never die and you never see death. It's interesting that they quote him again, they say, "How can you say that?" And then they changed the word to taste death.

"How can you say we'll never taste death?" And Jesus does not correct them. You say, "I don't get it, there's 56 million people that are gonna die in the world this year and Jesus says they'll never taste death. How does this work together?" Well, in a few chapters we're gonna really look at this when we get to the story of Lazarus, who dies, he's in a tomb, sisters are grieving and Jesus gets there and Jesus says this to them, he says, "I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me though he die yet shall he live. And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." You see, what he's saying is this, is that you and I physically, every one of us, if the Lord tarries, we will die, we will leave this place. But we will not taste or see the kind of death that takes place if our sin is not forgiven. You see, it's an amazing thing, you think of what Almighty Father has done, that we have been made to fellowship with God while we're here on this Earth. And when Jesus Christ died and then he rose from the dead, he consigned death to the duty of serving as our victory tunnel.

You see, death, literally, it has he's pulled out the stinger of death and he's made death the very tunnel or the servant by which we will experience perfect fellowship with God but only if we believe in him. Otherwise, we go what is called a second death and that's that eternal death where we stand in judgment and we're found wanting and lacking and we're separated from him forever. You see, you and I, we walk on this Earth and we have these bodies and we care so much about living that it makes us live safe lives.

And it's totally natural but what we're gonna find one day is that the transition from this life to the next is actually a smaller transition than that next transition between all of a sudden you die, physically, and at that very moment you're in perfect fellowship with your creator. And then he stands before you and he says, "You are justified." And he invites you into heaven to live forever with him.

And you see, this is what's available and Jesus is marching into Jerusalem in order to tell people they're gonna die apart from him, that they are in peril. And so I just wanna encourage you, let's take our fears to Christ and lean upon him, in particular the fears of death. Some of you may be fearing death today, maybe the death of spouse or a parent or a child. It is real. No one likes to talk about it, no one likes to listen to it but the fact is, is that fear, that fear of death, it really is kind of like a slave master that binds us with ropes. It confines us to small and cautious and bland and self centered in ways of life but you have to understand, Jesus Christ has literally cut these ropes. I wanna show you a passage, it's in the second chapter Hebrews, Hebrews chapter 2 verses 14 and 15. And this is what it says. I think it's gonna be on the screen.

It says, "Since the children," and the children he's talking about is us, "since the children share in flesh and blood." Okay, we have a body and if we cut our body, it bleeds. He goes, "So since we have a body," he says, "he," that's Jesus, "himself likewise partook of the same things." What does that mean? "He took a body that when it was broken, it bleed." And why did he do this? So that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and to deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to life long slavery." You see, Jesus is giving an invitation in this moment because he knows that everyone of us stand behind prison bars of fear of death. And it creates in us a desire to live safe. Where we're not dreaming and risking and sending and going for the sake of the Gospel and for the cause of love in the world.

You see, the world desperately needs the courage of fearless Christians who know that they will see or taste death and the only way for us to be that kind of Christian is for us to lean upon Jesus alone. And so the first thing we see is Jesus humbly plead with arrogant people and a second thing is that he promised life to dying people. But you know, promises need somebody to validate that promise. Every one of us, we want somebody. In fact, the quality of the promise is typically tied to the quality of the promise maker, the credibility of the one speaking, all right? And so this is the third thing that we see, is that Jesus validated his authority to all people. He plead with arrogant people, he promised life to dying people and he validated his authority to all people. But how did he do this? They say, "Now we know you have a demon because Abraham died and the prophets died also." And they said, "So who do you make yourself out to be?" They're asking the same question, "Who's validating? Whose credibility is at stake here that we can believe a promise like that?"

I mean, every single one of us, we live in a culture right now where we hear people making statements and promised that we just have learned, we just don't believe. I mean, it really is an amazing thing in our country there's a presidential debate now have a fact checker. That is an indictment upon the integrity not just of two individuals but a country. That the highest leader in the land, we're so convinced they're gonna lie to each other on TV that they have on the time, real time, fact checkers.

And so Jesus says, “You’ll never taste or see death.” And they say, “Someone validate this. Where’s the fact checker? Where’s the credibility? Who is going to be the credibility of that promise?” And he says, “You know what, guys, look, my father glorifies me and as for this Abraham man that we all care about so much, he rejoiced that he would see my day.” Now, Abraham has been in heaven for 2000 years at this point in time and they know that. You say, “Well, what does that mean then?”

Well, if you look at back Genesis chapter 12, we’re almost done here. God comes to man, maybe Abraham and he says, “Abraham, I’m gonna bless you. And I’m gonna bless you so much that even though you don’t have any children right now,” and to be totally honest with you he didn’t tell him this, “but it’s gonna take 24 more years for you to have your first child. I’m gonna make you into a great nation. You’re gonna have a child that has children that has children that has children and children, children, children. I’m gonna give you a special promised land on the Earth for you to live and one of those children will be The Messiah, the savior of the world and all the families of the world will be blessed through him.” And do you know what it says? It says that Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. And you get to Galatians chapter 3 in verse 7, 8 and 9 and you know what it says? It says that when God said that to him, Paul interpreted that as, and God spoke, says the Gospel, to Abraham and Abraham believed it and it was credited to him as righteousness.

You see, Abraham in faith, he looked at God’s promise where he was and he goes, “I can’t see it now but I cannot wait for it to take place and I’m absolutely certain that The Messiah’s gonna come because God promised it, that I’m placing my faith in the coming Messiah and I’m gonna believe that good news, that Gospel, that he’s gonna be the one that forgives me of my sin.” You see, some people say, “How do people in the Old Testament, how are they saved?” The same way that we are, just in a different direction. They believed in The Messiah that was to come. We believe in The Messiah who came. And God gives grace unto salvation. And they look and they go, “You’re crazy! You’re not 50 years old! You seen Abraham?” And Jesus says, “Truly, truly, I say to you before Abraham was, I am.” See, we looked at this a few weeks ago that when God looked at Moses and he says, “I’m gonna pick you.” And he says, “This is the task I have for you.”

And he goes back and before he does he goes, “And when I get there, what’s your name? I need to tell him who’s sending me.” And he says, “Tell him the I am sent you. And this will be my name forever.” And so when Jesus stood at this moment and he says, “Before Abraham was, I am.” What he was saying is not only am I the eternal Son of God, what he’s also saying is, I just came from heaven and Abraham was one of the people that was just worshiping me for the last 2000 years in heaven. He rejoiced in my day. And what they do next, they believe was being obedient to God’s law. See, the Bible actually tells us that if any man, any human man that’s not God, comes and claims to be God, that the people of Israel were to take stones and kill him, stone him. And that’s why they pick up stones at the end. They thought they were being obedient because someone was saying, “I’m the I am.” The problem is he was and they couldn’t see it.

And so, friends, I just urge you stake your confidence for life and for eternity on Jesus. Look to him today in faith if you've not trusted him. See, for those who believe in Jesus, God has given us a unique way to remember our rescue and to profess our allegiance to Jesus Christ, it's called the Lord's Supper. So for those that will be serving us, if you wanna go ahead and stand up and head to the back at this moment. The Supper consists, you know, of two elements, the bread, which is symbolic of the body of Jesus Christ that was broken, and a cup, which is symbolic of the blood that came out of that broken body. Jesus tells us, "Do this as a church family," for two reasons with one condition. He says, "I want you to do this in order to remember what I have done for you. In order to proclaim to other people without words that you're believing and resting in me alone for salvation." And the one condition is that you do this only after you've examined your heart.

And that exam is really twofold. One, are you believing in Jesus Christ. If you're not believing in Jesus Christ, we would ask you just to let these elements pass. It won't take long for us to do this but just to let these elements pass because to take them is to treasure them. The second way that we examine our own heart is that when these are passed, as we confess any known sin in our life, because Jesus said, "To eat and drink of these elements without first examining your heart is to invite judgment upon your head." So we don't want that to happen this morning. So as these are being passed, would you just pray. Say, "God, is there any sin in my life?" And confess that to him and he's promised to forgive you, okay? Let us pray together.

Father in heaven, we are grateful for your incredible love for us and as we prepare to take this supper, would you stir our heart with affection for the remembrance of what you have done? And God would you stir out heart with courage for the declaration that we want to make now and that is that we believe Jesus, that you are the Son of God. You are the great I am. And our eternity and our life, we stake to you. We thank you so much for your word and pray God that as we do this that you would help us to remember it. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.



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