

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

October 2, 2016

SPEAKER

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SERIES

Fully Alive

PART

25

TITLE

You Will Never See Death

SCRIPTURE

John 8:48-59



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Well, good morning, Providence. If I haven't met you yet, my name is Ryan and I get the privilege, genuine privilege, just to serve as one of your pastors here at the church. And so, I'm excited to open up God's word with you today. We're gonna march in through the Gospel of John. So we're gonna continue in the Gospel of John. If you don't have a with you this morning, there should be one in one of the chairs in front of you and there's a rack underneath that chair. We'll be on page 895. So, the Gospel of John, chapter eight. And we're gonna start in verse 48.

And if you've been here the last few weeks, you kinda know the context of what's goin' on, but we're about to hop into a middle of a conversation. So let me just set you up for kind of what this conversation looks like. During college ... Working through college, I worked as a server at Chili's. And there's fun stories. A ton a fun stories that you could share just about waiting on people for years and just seeing what that looks like. And actually the president at the seminary down the road here got [inaudible 00:01:00] and said that he thinks that everybody that goes into ministry should be a server at some point in their life so they can know what it means to wait on people who really don't care about them. So what he said, I was like, "Okay, wow, that's a little challenging."

But there was one story I'll never forget because, like I said, it sets the context what we're gonna be in John today. I walked up to this one table and I'm about to take their order. Get their drinks and everything. And it's a booth and on one side there's a mom and a dad and on the other side there's the son. And as soon as I walk up to this table, you could just feel the weight at this table. Just the tension there. And nobody's saying anything. I just kinda walk up and I'm like, "Hey, can I get you guys a Coke, or a water, or a sweet tea." And you can tell nobody's talking and they just kinda give their orders. And I'm like, I don't know what that's all about. So I kinda walk away and come back and still not talking to each other. Just looking at each other, not saying anything. And I'm like, this is just weird, right? This is like what's going on at this table? You're having a meal, but you're not talking to each other.

So I get their food order and I go back to the kitchen. And before I can make it back out, I hear them. And they are arguing with one another. I mean there's no more silence. It's just like no holds barred, let's just yell at each other in front of everybody in this whole place. I'm like, what are they arguing about? I don't know exactly what they're arguing about, but part of me as I'm serving other tables wants to walk by and just kinda lean in for a second to kinda figure out what the confusion and the arguing is all about. What's going on with this?

So I'm like, really, is this the right time? Is this the right place to have an argument and a conversation like this? Because the tension is now spreading. Not only is it at that table, but it's spreading to the tables around it. And then the whole place is looking in at these people screaming and arguing with each other.

Now why I say that is because in this context, we're hopping into a middle of a conversation. Last week, Brian looked at the first part of this where they're standing in the temple and the religious people are talking to Jesus and they're arguing. And I just imagine people are walking by. They don't even know what's going on, but they're walking ... They're probably wanting to lean in to say, "What are these people arguing about? This is the temple." So why are so many people arguing in this moment. What are they arguing about? And so I'm sure some people were stopping, some people were leaning in to see what this conversation, this debate is all about. And that's exactly what we're gonna do. We're gonna hop into the middle of this conversation and the first verse we read, we're gonna see the tension.

So, John, chapter 8, starting at verse 48.

The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and you have a demon?" And 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." And 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.' Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets who 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 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're not fifty years old, and you've seen Abraham?" 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.

Let's pray. Take a moment now just to silently pray that God would speak to you, this morning, through his word. Take a moment to pray for me, that I would just speak God's beautiful word and communicate it clearly this morning.

Father, we thank you that, no matter where we are in our walk with you, would you hear us when we pray. When we sit in this room with heaviness and sorrow, Lord, you're there with us and you hear our prayers. Whether we're in times of joy and laughter, God, you are there because you are the Great I Am. You are the beginning and the end. And so, God, we pray that you would help us to hear from you this morning. Hear from your word and, in turn, that you would change our hearts to live an abundant life. Through Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Alright, so in this context, what we're gonna see is there's three main themes that Jesus brings up in this debate and in this argument. And these are three things that we think about, sometimes intentionally and sometimes unintentionally, but they come to our mind over and over again. And honestly, they're three heavy things, but they're three really important things. And the three things are this. Judgment, death, and the Eternal God. Judgment, death, and the Eternal God. That's what Jesus keeps bringing up in this section, in this debate, and in this argument.

So the first one I want to us to talk about is judgment. And I phrase this statement like this, that God is the true judge of our lives. God is the true judge of our lives. And these first four verses in the section we read, what you see is a mini court case. I mean there's not really a court session going on, but what you see is there's accusations, and there's defense that's happening, and then there's a judge that's there. All this happens in these four verses.

So it starts with the accusations flying. The people there are looking at Jesus and they're like, "Hey you know what Jesus, what you are is a Samaritan. And what you are is you're demon possessed." Which, there is literal demon possession, but what they're talking about there is you're crazy. And these aren't just little punch to the stomach kind of insults. These are cut to the heart. Stabbing deep into who Jesus is. Because when they say that you're a Samaritan, they're claiming ... First of all they're making a racial slur to Jesus. They're makin' a racial slur to him because Samaritans at that time were considered half breeds. They weren't pure Jewish lineage and so that had gone out and in the past Jews had left the Jewish faith, and they had joined with other nations, and they started to worship other idols. So they started to intermarry with other nations.

And some wanted to still keep the faith of Judaism and so they just kinda created their own, and made their own temple, and they made their own worship system, and they kinda marred what God's word had said. And so they look at Jesus and they're like, "Hey, you're a Samaritan because we don't even know who your dad is. We know who your mom is, that's Mary. But we don't know who your dad is. So, your dad is probably a Samaritan, which makes you a Samaritan." So they're just casting these racial slurs on Jesus. And why that would cut so deep is because God is Jesus' Heavenly Father. And they're looking at him and they're like, "You don't even have a father. And if you do have a father, he's just a half breed. He's less than what he should be."

So they throw these racial slurs at him, and then they follow that up. If it wasn't enough they look at him and they call him crazy. They say, "You're demon possessed. You're crazy, man. You don't even know what you're saying."

Now, what's so interesting about this is how Jesus responds to this. 'Cause think about it. What if you were in that moment and people are yelling these things at you? These racial slurs, and they're calling you insane, and they're calling you crazy. Jesus seems to have, in this text, a sense of peace, a sense of security, a sense of calmness. And it's because as these accusations fly, Jesus puts forth his defense, and it's the same defense that we should have. The same defense that should give us peace in the midst of moments like this.

And so you see Jesus' defense in verse 49. And what he's laying out here, as he says, "Hey, I'm not seeking my own glory. I'm not healing people, I'm not preaching, I'm not doing all of these things for my sake. I'm actually doin' it for the Father's sake. For His glory. But you dishonor me, which ultimately means, you dishonor God the Father."

Now, one of Jesus' defense that he's laying out here, because he lays out two. But the first one is this, that when you slander another human being, when you slander that person, you're ultimately slandering God. What do you mean by that? Well, in the Book of James it says that we praise God with our lips and we turn around and slander man who is created in the image of God. It says these two things are not to be sewed. When we slander, and we gossip, and we put down others who are created in the image of God, what we're doing is we're marring who God is. We're slandering who God is. And Jesus says, "Hey, what you speak about me is ultimately about God."

And here's something we've got to know. Is ultimately that when we are sinned against, ultimately, it's not about us. It's about God being offended. We so often just rest on us. Like we've been offended, these things have been said about us, when it's much, much greater than that. It is an offense against God. And that works both ways. When people say things to us like that, it's ultimately offense against God, but also when we speak ill of others, what we're doing is we're sinning against God. He's the one that's ultimately offended by this. So Jesus says this to your response, to the way that you're accusing me, I'm gonna say, I'm here to glorify God so as you slander me, you're ultimately slandering the Father. So there should be a sense of peace we gain about realizing that God is there. And we follow that up by realizing that he is a just judge. A just judge. In verse 50, it says, "I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge."

When Jesus is saying, "I'm not living for myself. All these acts that I'm doing are ultimately not about me, it's about pointing to God the Father." And he looks to them, and says, "One day you will stand before God the Father and he's going to judge. And we're gonna see who's right and who's wrong." We're gonna stand before this just judge and he's gonna make all things right. He's going to do that. So Jesus, in the midst of this cast, in the midst of this tension, he can look at it and have peace because he knows those two things. That sin is ultimately in offense against the Father and that he is a just judge who will make all things right.

So you see the accusations, you see the defense, and then you see the judge. And in this text, what is Jesus saying that the father is going to judge? He doesn't come out specifically say it in this text, but you can kinda read into it and see. He's ultimately saying that God is going to judge our lives. God is going to judge our lives. He says, "I'm not seeking my own glory," in verse 50. I'm not living for myself, but there's one who's going to judge to tell me what I'm living for. And there's a God that's going to judge to say, "What are you living for?" So he's asking that question, what are we living for? What are we glorying in? What are we placing our weight and our hope in? And that is a great question. That's one that we have to consider. We have to know that there's judgment coming for what we live for.

But oftentimes as we think of those judgments, we think of this courtroom that we'll one day experience. We often view our own courtroom. And there's some misunderstandings that come as we view our courtrooms in the light of God's courtrooms.

So, a few weeks ago now, just the beginning of September, I was called in for jury duty, right? The fun, that aspect of jury duty. And everybody's telling me before I go in, you're gonna come in, you're gonna sit in a room for eight hours, and then they're gonna send you home. So I'm already prepared for that. I've got a book, I've got some things I'm gonna study, some stuff I'm gonna do. And I come in and I sit down in this room with 250 other people in Downtown Raleigh, and the first guy ... I sit beside and start talking to, he says, "I've been called in for jury duty six times and I've never left this room. I just come in here and I sit here all day." And so I've already got in my mind, this is what I'm gonna do the rest of my day. I'm kinda kickin' back, gettin' relaxed a little bit, read, and just try to enjoy this time.

Well about an hour into it, they start calling for jurors and they call my name. I'm like, great, I had this plan in place and it's just gone now. So they call me and several other people to come in and we go to this courtroom, and there's the judge, and all of it was just interesting to see. And then with the jury, we're trying to get a jury that's an unbiased jury, right? A jury of our peers that can weigh out the facts and evidences and say this person's innocent or this person's guilty. And so the lawyers are bringing up each one of us, and they're asking us questions about the case, and the judge just kinda set the case as a whole, what it looks like.

And I realize as I'm watching this happen that this is really how we view what will ultimately be the courtroom before God the Father one day. Where, hopefully, we'll stand before a jury of our peers, who are gonna vote and say, well this person was pretty good, or they were bad, or they were really good.

So, they're gonna vote on our behalf. And the judge, who really in our court system, is really kinda like the referee. Making sure people stay in bounds. He's calling out the lawyers, "Hey, can you guys come up here. You can't say that. You can't ask that question."

And so we have this picture. And even what we see on the courthouse buildings, what we see in pictures, is this picture of the lady justice. The blind lady justice, right? Where we look at this picture ... The reason why she's blindfolded is rightfully so that justice doesn't weigh out your social class, or your race, or anything like that, and make judgment. Rather, it's blinded and it weighs the scales. And based upon the evidence, it's either weighed to guilty or it's weighed to innocent. But it's like, how is it gonna balance out?

Now this is kinda how we view the courtroom and how we view judgment. But that's not God's courtroom. We need to realize this is not the picture of God. The judge that sits in our courtroom is not blindfolded. And he's not weighing out evidences that are given from our friends and our peers upon whether we're innocent or guilty. Think about this.

The God that we will sit before knows all things. He knows every motive and every thought. He knows what we live for. He knows every hair that is on our head. And so, he's not weighing out facts, he already knows it. He already knows what the ruling is going to be. So God the Father stands there and he says, "Guilty, guilty." Because of the sin that we've committed that has ultimately offended him.

Now I'm very thankful for pictures like this in the Gospel of John that talk about judgment and paint this picture of a courtroom 'cause we need to understand it. But what's so amazing about this is, this is not the point. This is not the main purpose. The main idea of the Book of John. The main idea of the Book of John is that we would know and we would believe. And in knowing and believing we would have eternal life.

I'm thankful for moments of judgment, but I'm also thankful that Jesus came ... Gospel of John, chapter three says not to condemn the world, but that through Him the world would have everlasting life. And that's what Jesus does. In the courtroom when Jesus hung on the cross, what he was ultimately doing is stepping into the courtroom as our defense saying, "I know he's guilty, but I will take his place." And that's why we celebrate. That's why we sing. Because we are guilty. We're not standing beside Jesus saying, "No, no, no, we're not guilty. We're not guilty." No, we stand in the courtroom and we say, "We're guilty. We did these things wrong. We did an offense to God Almighty. We did an offense to other people." But He has died on our behalf. He is the one that steps in our place.

And Jesus does that so well in this text. He lays down this picture of judgment and then right beside it, He lays down the picture of salvation. It's something we choose. Judgment or salvation. They're both laid down there. And as I read this text, it's shocking to me because if there's ever a time where I would want to bring down condemnation on somebody, it would be in this moment. If there was ever a time that Jesus should bring down condemnation, it's now. These people just yelled racial slurs at him and said he was insane. If I were Jesus in that moment, let's just dust off my hands and be done with these people because this is ridiculous. They're insulting me and they're insulting God the Father, so let's just push them to the side and move on. But that's not who Christ is. That's not who Christ is.

It's amazing he follows up all of these mean, hateful statements with the Gospel. With the Gospel. In verse 51, he says, ... This is right after the judge statement. He says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." This is a beautiful picture. From what Jesus is saying here, what he's unfolding here, is that ultimately God is the Great Absolute in life, not death. God is the Great Absolute in life, it's not death. Everything around us says that death is the ultimate. But in this text, Jesus says, "We won't even see death." And then later on, they accuse him, they're like, "You say that we won't even taste death," in verse 52. And notice, Jesus doesn't even correct him for that statement. Jesus said, "See, they say taste," he's like, "both are right." You won't see nor taste death.

That explodes the Gospel all over this conversation. All over it. There's hope that is given, even in the midst of this chaos. And this is the mission of Christ. The mission of Christ is this, that we would have life and have it to the full. He wants to give us abundant life. But we read this statement, and it's confusing to us, right? We read this statement, we'll never taste death, I mean, what is Jesus saying there? It's confusing for the people of that time, right? And I think the reason why is because when we think of death and we see this word as death, what we do is we define it as the flat line of vitals. Our vital signs have flat-lined and so now death has taken place. And I think if we could stand before God and ask Him to define death, and I think as we read His word and as He defines death, it looks completely different than that.

Death is, and by biblical definition, is the separation from God. That's what death is. A separation from God. And why wouldn't it be? Why wouldn't it be? Because everything that we experience ... Everything good, all things that are good, come from God. From the sunrise that we saw this morning, which was beautiful ... And you guys are the eight A.M. crowd, so I know you saw it, it was gorgeous and we enjoy that. As well as friends and family. All of those good things come from God. Everything that we experience. The air we breathe. All of that comes from God. And so literally when we're separated from God, all we experience is bad. All we experience is negative.

And right now, in this moment, God has shown us all, what they call common grace. That God's goodness pours over the just and the unjust. But there will come a day when Christ will come again. This time, not to offer salvation, but to bring judgment. And we choose which one we're gonna experience. Are we gonna bow our knee to Christ as our loving king or will we come and see him as the just judge?

And death, no doubt, is terrible. And this picture that God paints in his Word of a separation between us and him. Think about it. Think about death again for a second in the sense of when death came on the scene. Like it wasn't God's original plan, right? It came in a garden. How many sin, death comes on the scene, he says, this is one of the curses for your sin. And so did Adam and Eve die in that moment? I mean, did their vitals flat line in that moment? No, what happens They're separated from God, but you still walk in the garden with God. And now they're sent out from the garden and they're having to tool the ground, and they're having to deal with death, and sin. Even the death of their son. They're struggling with all of that because now death has entered into the world. Both physical and spiritual.

And what's glorious about this is, throughout the whole , God's trying to fill in that chasm. God is filling in that chasm so that we can experience a relationship with Him again. That we would dwell with Him again. I mean, this is amazing. This traces through the whole . Back in Genesis, there's a separation. God dwells in the garden, they sin, they're separated. And God's like, "Well, I still want to dwell with my people. My people still need me." So he creates the tabernacle, which literally means to dwell. God comes and he dwells in the holy of holy's in the midst of his people. But we go and we mess that up, we bring sin into that, we start worshipping idols in that temple. So God's like, "I've gotta go to the next stage. I've gotta go to the next extreme."

And at the beginning of the Gospel of John, says that Christ came from Heaven to Earth to dwell among men. The God of life came down in the midst of our death to dwell with us. That we would experience abundant life. And it doesn't stop with Christ. You go to revelation. And one day, in the new Heavens, and in the new Earth, God comes down again and uses the same word, to dwell with man. And all this dwelling, and all this interaction with God, this is eternal life. This is what eternal life is.

The Gospel of John will say later in chapter 17 that this eternal life. This is the definition that they would know me, the only true God. So eternal life doesn't start once we die. It's not, well, once we die, then we're going to enter eternal life, no. Jesus came. And He came to bring us eternal life in this moment. But when we read this statement, and we see this, our response, honestly, in our hearts or in our minds, or even with our mouths, are almost the same as these people. Where we're like, you had a demon. You're crazy, Jesus. What are you talking about? Death is everywhere. I mean, it doesn't matter what age you are, you see death around you.

Even this weekend, a four year old little girl lost her Betta fish. Little Raph died, and we're trying to explain death. Even to a four year old. As well as when you're older, seeing people pass away. Physical death is everywhere. And we're always looking for the cure. So we look at Jesus in this moment, we're like, wait a second, Jesus. This seems crazy. You're saying that you'll never die, but all we're doing is looking at death through the physical lens and not the spiritual lens. And we hate death. Rightfully so, we hate death. God hates death.

But, just think about our culture. How much money, and time, and effort that we invest into trying to ward off bodily death as long as we can, right? The other day I was going through the drive through at a fast food restaurant and I'm looking at the menu and I'm literally counting calories on the menu. I'm like, okay, that one will give me this many calories and that one will give me this many calories. It's because I want to stay healthy, right? I want to take care of my body. But as I'm looking at it, I'm thinking, I'm at a fast food restaurant line. If I'm going for healthy, fast food is not the way to go. But we count our calories. We make sure we're good on that side of things. We invest money in health care.

Think about just our cars. Just our cars alone, we are investing our money in air bags, and seat belts ... I mean, we've got an air bag for everything. You got a window air bag, you got a air bag in front of you, you got a air bag on your side, there's air bags everywhere. I'm just imagining, if you get in a car accident, you're just gonna be in this big ball of fun, jumping around because there's so many air bags.

And we take money and we put it in locks on our doors because we wanna be kept safe at night. Everywhere around is for investing money to fend off physical death and what we're ultimately doing, is we're trying to fix an interior problem with something on the exterior. We're ultimately trying to fix something on the outside when there's really a spiritual problem with it. We'll go so far as even to deny death. To deny death. All these exterior things are not gonna fix the problem. They're not.

Imagine if you came to ... Or just imagine you're my neighbor. And you come out one day, and you see me, I go to get my car, and I go to turn over my car, and as I turn it it's just clicking. And I get out of the car and I'm like, "Hmm, okay. I know what I'm gonna do." And I go into my garage and I pull out my shop vac and then I vacuum out the seats, and I vacuum out the carpets, and it looks really clean and nice in there. I'm like, "well, let me get some Armor All real quick." And I get some Armor All and I Armor All the dash, and I Armor All the seat belt buckle. I'm even going that far because I used to detail cars. I'm going to the extremes to make it perfect. And then, I put all that stuff away, I get back in my car, and I go to start it up again. And it's just ... Nothing's happening.

So you're watching all this happen. You see me get out of the car again, I go inside, and I get some wax. And I go out and I wax the car and then I wipe it off so it gets really smooth. So now I got a really smooth outside and a really clean inside. I gotta be good now, right? I go and I jump back into the car and I go to start it back up and it's just ... At some point, you would come up to me and you'd be like, "Hey, Ryan, I like how your car looks and everything, but there's a bigger issue. There's something wrong with your battery probably, there's something wrong with your start, or your engine. You're not gonna fix it by doing all these things on the outside."

That's what we try to do. We try to find all these external cures when Christ stands here with the ultimate cure. And He says that we don't have to die. One of man's greatest fears, He looks at and he says, "You don't have to die."

I was talking to a guy at our church that his wife is a nurse and he says, "She's been in the room ... Why people have died. Those that know the Lord and follow Him and those that haven't. You can tell a clear difference between the two." One of them there seems to be a sense of peace and the other end there's almost a sense of cold darkness. So you can see the two.

It's because eternal life that's given now extends forever. You think about it. By definition, eternal life cannot stop, right? Or what be eternal life? Eternal life is not gonna stop for five minutes on a hospital bed. It's not. It's gonna continue for all eternity.

And one thing that we know for sure ... One thing that we can know with no shadow of the doubt as we read the , is that everybody in this room will be here consciously, in a physical body, two million years from now. Everybody will be. We'll have a personality, we'll be able to talk to one another, but we're gonna spend the rest of eternity in one or two places. In eternal life in the presence of God, or in eternal death separated from God and all that is good. That's what lays before us. And Christ in his great beauty says that if you will listen to my words and obey, believe you will have everlasting life.

And we read a claim like that, we have to understand who's saying it. Because you read it and that sounds extremely bold to make a statement like that. Even the Jews said that. They're like, "Wait, if all these other people died ... Abraham died, the Prophets died, they spoke the Word of God. Now you're coming in and you're saying that you have something better?" And they ask this question in verse 53, it's the question that you and I have to ask as we read this text. And he says at the end of verse 53, "Who do you make yourself out to be?" Who do you make yourself out to be?

And at that time, they'll start raising up the heroes of faith. They're like, "Who do you make yourself out to be? Are you better than Abraham? He was one of the founders of our faith. There's no way you're better than him." And then you read earlier in the Gospel. John, this lady looks at him ... Lady at the well and says, "Are you better than our Father Jacob? You can't be better than him. He was a spiritual monster. He had this great faith. You can't be better than him, right?"

And the other Gospels talk about that there is somebody coming that's better than Moses, who is considered the most humble man on the face of the Earth. There's somebody better than Jonah, there's somebody better than King Solomon, who's considered the wisest and the richest man in his time. And all this is leading to the question, who do you make yourself out to be? And Jesus is like, "Yes, I'm better than all of them." And that's why I can make this statement. That you will never taste or see death if you listen to my words and you believe. Because the fact of the matter is that Jesus is the eternal God. Jesus is the eternal God.

Verse 58, Jesus says to them ... Again, this is a huge statement for the whole Gospel of John, but extremely impactful for even us today. Jesus says, "Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." Before Abraham was, I am. Now if Jesus just wanted to say that he was here, he was born before Abraham was, he just would've said, "Before Abraham was, I was." And I don't think he would've gotten the same reaction. I don't think they would've picked up stones to try to stone him because they probably would have said, "Well he's just claiming to be an angel, or some kind of being that was here at the very beginning of creation. That's a little weird, but at least he's not claiming to be God."

But that's not what Jesus says, right? He doesn't say, "Before Abraham was, I was." He says, "Before Abraham was, I am." And this should weigh heavy on us, just like it weighed heavy on these people. Because this statement is pointing back to the Book of Exodus. In Exodus chapter three, God is speaking to Moses and he says, "I want you to go into Egypt, and what I want you to do is I want you to redeem my people. I want you to free them and bring them out of Egypt. That's what I want you to do." And Moses is making these arguments back to God and he's like, "Okay, if I go and I tell them that ... I say, 'Hey, God said it. I'm supposed to bring these people out. His people.' They're gonna say, 'Which God is that?'" Because Egypt had a lot of Gods, right?

Is it the Sun God, Ra? Is that the one you're talking about? Is it our Fertility God? Is it our Rain God? Which God are you talking about because we need to know, Moses. And so, God speaks back to Moses and he gives them his personal, intimate name and he says, "Tell them I Am sent you." What does that mean? What is I Am? What are you saying? What does that mean? Some of the root word and verb that it means to be. What God is claimed in the Book of Exodus.

What Jesus claiming here in the Gospel of John is that God is not contingent on anything. God was here before the beginning and He will be here at the end. He is the alpha and the omega. He's here in the times of perfection, he's here in the times of sorrow. He says I am God. I'm not hanging on anything else, rather, all of creation hangs on me. All of creation exists, and breathes, and thrives in me. Even the breaths that we get in this moment is because God has given it to us.

And what's beautiful about this statement is ... What he's saying is that God never gets better and He never gets worse, He just is. And all of His perfection and all of His, God is. So we look at this moment when Jesus makes the statement, and they knew what he was saying. Because they picked up stones to stone him because you're claiming to be God right now. You're using the name of God for yourself. And this wasn't the first time and it won't be the last time in the Gospel of John where Jesus will make this connection. We've seen this as we've been walking through it, but Jesus says, "I am the bread of life." Same word, Egō eimi, in Greek. Egō eimi. I am the light of the world. I am the door and I am the Good Shepherd. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the way, the truth, and the life. And I am the true vine.

But this statement ... This one in John eight, verse 58 is the most blunt of all of Jesus' statements claiming to be God. Because he makes the I am statement. He doesn't attach an illustration to show what kind of God this I Am is. He just says it and lays it out there. He says, "I am."

Now what's so sad about this is that the people in this story can't get passed Abraham to see the Great I Am. They're hung up, they're caught on Abraham and they can't get passed it. So what Jesus does is he uses Abraham to point to himself. He shows that Abraham didn't live for all of these works that would bring salvation, but rather, Abraham lived for Christ, for the Messiah.

Verse 46, it says this, "Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it, and he was glad." Now Abraham lived thousands of years earlier. And they're like, "Jesus, you're not even 50 years old. How in the world did Abraham see you?" And commentators bounced back and forth about what exactly this means. Whether it was when Abraham was sacrificing Isaac, if that's when he saw the picture of the Messiah come and take away sins, whether it's a picture of just God spoke to him and he heard it and he saw it, he saw a picture of the future. We don't know. But the truth is set that Abraham was looking forward to the day the Messiah would come to take away sin. He understood that in some form or fashion.

So Jesus says, "You wanna see something great, look back to Abraham and look to what he pointed to. And when you look to what he pointed to, what you'll see is me." See [inaudible 00:39:43] said it like this, that we're oftentimes like a child playing in the mud when a vacation at the beach is waiting for us. Abraham is good, but compared to Christ, he's nothing. So we should model Abraham. Model Abraham? Look at Abraham's life.

There's two things I want us to pull out as we start to close here. It's first, look at how Abraham rejoiced in verse 56. He rejoiced that he would see his day. And it says that he would see it. Abraham rejoiced and he believed.

Now, when we think about the Old Testament, how are those people at that time saved? We think oftentimes of all the sacrifices that were made in the Old Testament. Well, cool, it's all these sacrifices that they put up, that's what made them good before God as they went into Heaven. And Jesus, even in this section, is saying that that's not true. It's Abraham's faith. It was Abraham's faith. He believed he would see Christ one day, he would see the Messiah one day. So the people of the Old Testament, he [inaudible 00:40:52] talks about it. The pull out of all these goats and bulls would not be enough to forgive them of sins. It wouldn't be. And our works are not gonna be enough to forgive us of our sins. All that stuff is just rubbish before God unless we know Jesus Christ as the Great I Am. As the one that saves and redeems us. Abraham sees this and he believes, but he also rejoices. He rejoices. And we, too, are called to rejoice in the day of Christ.

That's why we meet every Sunday. Because Sunday was the day that Christ was raised from the dead. That we saw that he had conquered death and that we can have eternal life through him. So we meet, we gather, and we sing and we rejoice, we pray and we rejoice, we give and we rejoice. All these things we rejoice in our salvation. We rejoice in the Great I Am. And so as we end our time, that's my challenge to you. That you would rejoice in God. As we sing the last song, that you would rejoice in God. And as we move to the Lord's Supper now, this is a time where we rejoice in God. We rejoice in His great sacrifice.

So if you're serving the Lord's Supper you can make your way back there. And as they're making their way back, just want to remind you guys why we do the Lord's Supper. It is one, to remember and rejoice. Like if you know Christ, we want you to remember this moment, to look back at Christ's great sacrifice. To look back and remember. But also, in this time, as you take the Lord's Supper, this is a tangible time for you to proclaim. To rejoice and proclaim the death of Christ. You do. As believers. That's what God's Word says. But we don't just stop there, we look forward to the future. When Christ will come again. Where all these wrongs will be made right. Where all these small pictures of death and pain will be taken away and be made new.

So Christian ... Take a moment as this is being passed just to look back at what Christ did. Look to this moment right now and realize that you're proclaiming the death of Christ and then look forward with hope. But if you're not a believer and you're not putting your faith in Christ. You read this text, you struggle with it some, my challenge for you is just to let it pass because this is for believers. But I challenge you to do the same thing. I want you to look to this moment right now. Look at a church that proclaims the death of Christ. That we believe it, that we live for it, that this is what our life is all about. But we also ... I want to challenge you to look back at Christ's great sacrifice and believe. To believe in Him so that you can look forward one day. Not with fear, and anxiety of judgment, but rather with hope and excitement.

Let's pray. God, we thank you that you are the Great I Am. You're the rock of our salvation. You're the one that we proclaim and we remember now. So, Lord, I pray as we take the Lord's Supper, that you'd help us to look back, look at this moment, but also to look forward. Rejoicing that our are our Great King and the Great I Am. Because, Lord, you, and you alone can save. You, and you alone can redeem. So in Christ's name we thank you. Amen.



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