

John 8:48-59

Jesus teaches us to pray, “Our Father who art in heaven.” But He does not give this prayer to the unbelieving Jews in our text. Instead, were He to teach them what to say, it would have to be: “our father who art in hell.” I’m being serious here. They boast about Abraham being their father. They claim God as their father. But Jesus sets them straight. In their conversation just before our text He tells them, “*You are of your father the devil.*”

Now some might say, “them’s fightin’ words!” And this is what we have here...a fight between Jesus and these unbelieving Jews. Not a brawl; an argument. Our text is one big argument. And this is just the tail end of it.

This is a side of Jesus we don’t see very often. And we’re not sure what to think of it. We do prefer His softer side, like when He holds little children in His arms. But He is not bipolar. Unlike ours, His love is constant. Unlike us, He never flips out. We may be seeing a different side of Jesus in our text today, but here also is His love in action, just as much as when He cradles infants.

You fathers...since this is Father’s Day...which is more loving: when you tenderly hold your child in your arms, or when you aggressively protect your child from something that wants to harm your child? They’re both loving. Even though one action is soft and the other aggressive. Today we see the aggressive Jesus. And we can say that were He not aggressive here, we would have reason to question His love for us.

These Jews, you see, are not acting on their own. Their father is the evil one, and he is behind the scenes strategizing their attack. He is the father of lies. This is how Jesus Himself describes him just before our text. A lie has, as its target, the truth. Every lie has its origin in the devil. And every lie is an attack on Jesus who is the truth, yes, but also an attack on those who believe the truth. And that’s you. So when Jesus fights against the unbelieving Jews in our text, He’s fighting for you. When Jesus aggressively counters their lies with the truth, He is protecting you from the lies; protecting you from the father of lies, the devil.

Now these liars in our text, as Jesus calls them to their face, are so ridiculous in what they are saying that anyone can see they’re lying. Telling Jesus that He has a demon...seriously? Do they expect anyone to believe this lie?

But this is how the devil operates. Tell a lie often enough and people eventually believe it. It’s called brainwashing. Consider how the world came to be. Satan was there. He saw God create the sun, moon, and stars; the earth with all its creatures. And he saw God create man from the dust. But telling his lies over and over he now has the vast majority of mankind accepting as truth his ridiculous lie that we evolved from apes, and that the creation account in Genesis is simply a fictional tale.

The devil is truly the father of lies. Scripture clearly teaches that Jesus is true God. But most deny this truth. Islam, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, and every other non-Christian religion rejects what Scripture claims concerning Jesus.

And within Christendom the devil has brainwashed many with his lies about Baptism and the Lord's Supper...many Christians viewing these only as our acts of obedience to God, and not as Scripture clearly teaches that these are Sacraments through which Jesus comes to us with forgiveness, life, and salvation. And even Scripture itself...the devil has many believing his lies. This Word of life is seen by many merely as a "how-to" book; as rules for living, and not as the power of God unto salvation which works effectively in us as life-giving medicine.

What about you? The father of lies wants you, my friend. So Jesus urges you in our text to be on guard. Here is how He puts it: "*If anyone guards My words, he will never see death.*" In English the word is "keep," but in Greek the meaning is to guard. As you guard the words of Jesus faithfully, you have His promise that His words of life will keep you from death. You will not die spiritually and eternally. Jesus' words have this power in your life.

But are you guarding them? Are you consistently faithful in guarding them? You may not fall for the devil's lie that Baptism is only your work of obedience and not God's Holy Sacrament, but do you remember your baptism daily? You may not fall for the devil's lie that the Lord's Supper is only our act of obedience and not the Lord's true body and blood, but do you hunger and thirst for it? You may not fall for the devil's lie that Scripture is just a manual of instruction and not Jesus' words of life, but is it your daily companion? Do you read it often and gladly come to hear it? Satan is no fool. If he cannot convince us with his lies, he tempts us to take the truth for granted. And when we do this, we stop guarding Jesus' words of life. And this is deadly serious.

Dear friend, you have a Savior who loves you and who fights for you. And He does not take you for granted. Even though we fail so often in guarding the truth, He does not. Listen to what He says in our text. "*I guard (My Father's) Word.*" "*I guard it!*" He says. Jesus guards the Word of God for you. He set up guard over the truth against the liars in our text, and He sets up guard for you today. Always remember that He fights for you. He keeps His Gospel coming to you. He is like the soldier who keeps defending America from our enemies even when the people he defends take him for granted and no longer appreciate him.

Jesus never fails you, not even when we fail Him. He never stops loving you. And He always, always forgives you...and not just if you appreciate it; He forgives you because of His mercy toward you. He died on the cross for you, and this stands forever so that you have a Savior forever, and your baptism means everything for you forever. This is the truth, and Jesus guards this truth for you. Amen.