

## John 8:48-59

The American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Desert Storm, the War on Terrorism. That's a lot of wars for a country which has been in existence for only 234 years. That's a lot of blood that was shed, a lot of soldiers who died, who gave their lives for you and me. And that's a lot of courage that was shown, a lot of honor. And not just honor for country, land, and people...honor even to the enemy. When General Chamberlain was selected by Ulysses Grant to accept the letter of surrender from General Robert E. Lee ending the Civil War, people around the world were shocked when General Chamberlain ordered his troops to stand at attention and salute the defeated South. They saluted the enemy. They showed honor to the Rebel army.

That's more than what the enemies of Jesus ever did to Him. They gave Him no honor whatsoever. They mocked Him. They insulted Him. In today's text they berated Him as a liar, as one possessed by a demon. They had no respect at all for Jesus. And what had He ever done to them? He spoke the truth. He called sinners to repentance. He invited those who were trapped by guilt to have freedom in His words of life. And because the Jews in our text hated Him for it, He showed them the error of their ways. He did not dishonor them. He loved them. It was a tough love, a love full of discipline because they needed it. But never did they give honor and respect to Him.

This weekend honor will be spoken of quite often. American citizens, grateful for our freedoms, honor those who died in the battlefield. Most all of those soldiers are unknown to us. Most died long before we were born. They died in German trenches, on beaches near Normandy, in warships on the Pacific Ocean, in fighter jets and bombers high above the earth. We knew them not, yet we honor them, and we thank God for them.

But even as we honor those who died, sadly we like the Jews in our text, often fail to give honor to our Triune God. Friends, is it not true? We may show up on Sunday to hear His words (some more than others), but do we take His words out the door with us? Do they become a part of our life? We may walk up to the Communion Table, but do we really stop and think of what He is giving to us here? Do we anticipate with eagerness the Service of Holy Communion, or do we groan inwardly knowing the service will be longer that day? We honor Him with our offerings, or do we give Him only what is left over, what we can afford, and thus rob Him of His honor? We honor Him by living a Christian life, but isn't it true that very often we dishonor our Triune God by how we live?

How is it that a man can put up a flag for Memorial Day to honor his country, but give no honor to the God who gave him his country by ignoring His House on Sunday? How is it that Christians who know our Triune God by name, can give more honor to soldiers we do not know than to the God we claim to know and love?

In defining honor we include terms such as respect, esteem, reverence, and tribute. And honor goes hand-in-hand with value and worth. Those things which have great value to us we give honor to. We give less honor, or no honor, to things with little worth. A fifty-dollar bill we will guard and treasure, but a penny if it falls to the ground, we may not bother with stooping to pick it up. We honor one but not the other. Many American citizens place great value on the freedoms they have, and so they give great honor to those who died to secure their freedoms. The Jews in our text did not regard Jesus as the Messiah. They saw Him as one with little value, and so they treated Him with contempt, giving Him no honor.

Does it not follow that Christians, because they value highly the name of the Triune God and all His gifts and blessings to them through His Word and Sacraments, will highly honor all that is sacred? A true Christian will honor the Lord's Day by being in church. A true Christian will honor the Lord's Word by hearing it gladly. A true Christian will honor the Lord's body and blood by receiving it with joy. A true Christian will honor God by singing His praises, by giving an offering freely, by desiring to live a Christian life. The Jews in our text thought they were truly God's people, but Jesus showed them because of their dishonor toward Him and His words, that they were instead sons of the evil one. Who do you belong to? Who do you think you are? It's easy to tell by who and what you honor.

Jesus says in our text, "I honor My Father." These were not empty words. He showed this honor by obeying His Father's will. He emptied Himself. He lowered Himself to be a servant. He accepted the cup of suffering His Father gave Him to drink. Jesus honored His Father by doing what He was sent to do...dying on a cross for every sinner. And so on Golgotha, dear friends, is where the greatest Soldier died. Not Normandy, not Gettysburg, not Pearl Harbor...the greatest battlefield of all was Mt. Calvary. There God died for you. There you were declared forgiven of your sins. There you were delivered from the power of the devil. There he was crushed for you.

And so we can say, in looking at that great battlefield, that God honors you. He placed such a high value on you that He was willing to suffer hell for you. He did this in spite of the fact that you and I so often give little honor to Him. Even though we were His enemies, He freely out of love laid down His life for you.

That, more than anything, is what our Triune God is all about. We speak today of His majesty, His unity, His essence. We speak of Him being three Persons in one Godhead, of Him being almighty, eternal, uncreated. What does all of this mean? That this holy, majestic, eternal, all-powerful God who made you, came down for you to die on a cross, so that you, believing this by His grace, will live forever with him in heaven. No soldier ever had that kind of love for you. None of those who died on the battlefields of this earth ever poured out their blood for you the way that your God did on the cross. No one ever showed more courage for you than your Lord. The place of the highest honor of all is that place where He hung suspended between earth and sky for you. Friend, because God did this for you, you are forgiven of all your sins, forgiven for all of your dishonor, forgiven for everything.

Does this not inspire you! Does this not call forth from your inner being all manner of thanks and praise! Does this not instill within us the desire to honor our gracious God in every way we can! This weekend it is good for us to honor those who died for us. But even as we are Christians, we will honor our God and Lord not one weekend a year, but daily for the rest of our life. To Him be all glory and honor now and forever! Amen.