

“Who’s Your Daddy?”

John 8:39-59

Sermon for the Fifth Sunday in Lent 2022; April 3, 2022

Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Rifle, Colorado

Rev. Charles Westby, Pastor

+++++

We find Jesus in our Gospel reading today in a tense debate with what John’s Gospel calls the Jews. The debate was about who Jesus is. It took place in terms of who is your father. Or maybe we would say, “Who’s your daddy?” This reading is fitting as we sit here today on the cusp of Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

Regarding the expression, “Who’s your daddy?” I am thinking of the movie “Rush Hour,” where the characters played by Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker play the playground game, “Who’s your daddy,” when they meet for the first time. It would be like one kid saying to the other, “My daddy can bench press 300 pounds.” Then the other kid responds with “Well my daddy can run the 100 meter sprint in nine seconds.” Then they each say, “Don’t talk about my daddy.” Although let us talk to others about Jesus’ daddy and our daddy in Him.

In the context, we should understand the term “the Jews” to be the Pharisees in Jerusalem who were part of the rulers and ruling class of the people of Israel at that time, along with the chief priests. The term should be understood as those who had a certain religious understanding of things coupled with political, religious, and social power in Israel. The term in John’s Gospel should not be understood just simply along ethnic lines. The people themselves are often identified in John’s Gospel as different from the Pharisees and chief priests, for it says in John 7:31 that “many of the people believed in Him.”

The debate in John chapter 8 began when Jesus declared: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12 ESV).

What does Jesus’s declaring that He is the light of the world have to do with “Who’s your daddy?” Well, in response to Jesus, they said, “Abraham is our father” (John 8:39). They thought they could claim God as their father just simply because they could trace ancestry back to Abraham. They accused Jesus of not being able to trace such ancestry: “You are a Samaritan and have a demon,” they said (John 8:48). “We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God,” they said (John 8:41 ESV). They were accusing Jesus of being a foreigner and of being born of sexual immorality.

But they were failing to realize that they needed a redeeming light. Jesus said to them, “You are from below. I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that . . . if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:23-24 NKJV). Every standing we may claim in this world cannot do anything about sin and death. Sin is the problem that humans have with God, and sin brings death. The ancestral claim is from below. It is of this world, but this world is passing away. We need the light to come into our world from the outside to redeem us; to be found here to take us to the Father. Jesus came as the light from above to accomplish such redemption. But they did not think that they needed redemption because they were children of Abraham. They had the ancestral claim, and they thought that that was sufficient.

But in this they were lying to themselves and to God. In this claim they took offense at Jesus and wanted to get rid of Him. But to lie and not acknowledge the truth and to want to harm someone else is to exhibit that one is a child of a different father. Jesus refers to this father as the devil, whom Jesus says is a liar and the father of lies. He was also a murderer from the beginning

(John 8:44). Even as they made the ancestral claim, the Pharisees and chief priests were engaging in evil.

But maybe this debate between Jesus and the Jews about “who’s your daddy” is not really relevant today. Many people may claim that they stand on their own. They are who they are in their own person. It makes no difference where they came from.

Yet, many of these same people regard themselves as children of the enlightenment. They might say, “We are children of science over against the darkness of superstition.” And superstition for them includes the Christian claim that this man Jesus is also God; that His death was an atoning sacrifice; that He really rose from the dead; that there is life beyond this life where we will meet God. Life is only here and now and science has all the answers, they think.

Yet, science has no ultimate answer to physical death, and it offers no preparation for eternal life; in fact it denies that there is such life. When the heart stops beating and the brain stops functioning the lights go out and that’s it; just darkness. This really is a darkness of soul, a soul without the light of hope. It is no wonder that so many people in the west are searching for a light of the soul, yet they think that they cannot find it the Christian faith, in a commending oneself wholly into the care of Jesus.

Jesus declares that He is the light that shines in this darkness. He Himself shines in the soul with a light that is the light of life. He gives peace and hope.

“There is no light now,” Jesus says, “and no light beyond this now, if you do not believe that I am he” (John 8:24). Any other claim will not help you. If you do believe that Jesus is he, then you are in light now and in what is beyond, just around the corner, for this light is life and the peace of forgiveness that Jesus holds in Himself.

How can Jesus be this light? Jesus says, “Before Abraham was, I Am,” that is, I am Yahweh, the LORD (John 8:58). The Jews understood the meaning of Jesus statement, because they were taking up stones to stone Him for blasphemy when He said this (John 8:59).

But what is the proof that Jesus is “I Am?” The enlightenment requires proof. Prove it Jesus or Christians, the enlightenment demands. Is it some stupendous sign and wonder? Is it some proof that will satisfy reason or science? Is it the triumphant and prosperous life, that is, if a person believes in Jesus then that person will have perfect health; nothing bad happening; wealth and success, complete triumph over sin in body and soul?

Jesus says to the Jews: “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, that God is my Father. For this will show that I do nothing of myself, but I speak just as the Father has taught me” (John 8:28). When I am lifted up, Jesus says. What is this being lifted up? Is it being lifted up in praise? No. It is being lifted up on a Roman cross. The claim Jesus makes is that when they crucified Him it would show that He is the Father’s Son.

This is because Jesus testified that He came not to do His own will but the will of the Father; that He came not to seek His own glory, but the glory of the Father; that He came not seeking the glories of this world, but to fulfill the love of the Father to the uttermost (John 12:27-33). Thus, He will not defend Himself against them and will let them to do Him whatever they will; though He will have told them the truth of who He is. He will not have lied to them about who He is because He is true (John 8:28, 55). In letting them to do Him whatever they will, He demonstrates that He is the Son of the Father (Phil. 2:5-8).

But then the Father will do something. Jesus says: “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me of whom you say, ‘He is our God’” (John 8:54). The Son will glorify the Father by allowing Himself to be put to death by them. The Father will glorify the Son by raising Him from the dead. Jesus pointed only to His death and His resurrection as the

proof that He is the One. His “proof” is the redeeming acts of God that bring light were there is only the darkness of sin and death. This “proof” is for redemption and faith. He does not provide a proof that will satisfy reason or any need for a miraculous sign.

In the name of the enlightenment, Jesus’ proof is rejected. Science, however, cannot defeat sin and death. If our souls cry out against death in the stubborn belief that there must be something more—it is quite human to cry out for this; if our consciences long for true and lasting forgiveness—it is quite human to long for this; then Jesus is the light the soul looks for and His “proof” is more than sufficient. When He died, He carried our sins. When He rose, He rose in indestructible life, the first of the new creation, the promise of life beyond, all according to the will of the Father.

So who’s your daddy? God the Father is Jesus’s daddy. Embracing Jesus, honoring Him as God’s Son who came to redeem you, you have God the Father as your daddy too, now, in grace and peace, and in the world to come, in eternal life and joy. Amen.