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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
March 8, 2015
3rd Sunday in Lent

Scripture Lessons: Genesis 22:1-19 Passion: Trial and Denial
Hymns: 358; 342; 151; 413:5,6 (242)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: John 10:24-33

Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do
You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."

25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The
works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. 26
But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said
to you. 27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they
follow Me. 28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never
perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 My
Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is
able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. 30 I and My Father
are one."

31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. 32 Jesus
answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My
Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?" 33 The Jews
answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but
for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself
God."
(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Crucified Savior, Dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Perspicuity.

That's our word for the day. It's an odd one I'll admit. It means clarity, as in verbal clarity. You probably don't use it in everyday conversation. In fact it may be that you have never used it in a normal conversation, but you have experienced it, and you have also experienced the opposite. The opposite is when someone **obfuscates**, they try to make things as difficult to understand as possible, and nothing is clear. So these terms are used regarding the Scriptures as what the Lord has to say in His Word. There are many who characterize the Bible as being a dark and mysterious book that is difficult to understand. They find that there are teachings in the Bible that don't make sense to them, that don't agree with their reason, or with their view of the world, or with what they want to be true. Indeed there are some passages of Scriptures that are more challenging than others, but that is not because they are dark and confusing. It is because they express truths beyond our experience, or beyond our limited understanding.

The leaders of the Jews didn't like many of Jesus' teachings. They also wanted to trip Him up in some way so that He might lose credibility with the people. They knew that many people were talking about Jesus, and that the talk revolved around whether or not Jesus was the promised Messiah who was to come into the world. As our text opens these Jewish leaders surrounded Jesus in an attempt to intimidate Him and put Him on the spot. They accused Jesus of being deliberately obscure, and so they challenged Him to speak clearly, telling them whether or not He was the Christ.

Their tactics were actually quite pointless, for Jesus didn't attempt to confuse anyone with dark mysterious language, nor was Jesus attempting to hide His true identity, and the significance that truth had for all people. In His response --

THEME: Jesus Tells Us Plainly that He Is the Christ!

Jesus declares that the evidence for Him being the Messiah was already crystal clear.

I. Jesus Pointed to the Works which Testify He is the Christ.

John 10:24-26 Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, “How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” 25 Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. 26 But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.

Jesus wasn’t the one keeping them in doubt. The Jews were doing that for themselves. The leaders of the Jews had instilled in the minds of the people expectations concerning the Messiah that was to come that were simply not scriptural. They had false ideas about national independence and glory that they supposed would be ushered in by the Messiah when He came onto the scene. Jesus’ teaching was about the kingdom of God, but He didn’t teach them about throwing off the shackles of the Rome. He taught them about repentance and the remission of sins. So they accused Jesus of teaching obscure concepts, instead of declaring plainly that He was the Christ. Jesus fulfilled the prophecies regarding the Messiah. He performed the miracles the prophet Isaiah had foretold.

Isaiah 35:5-6 “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing.”

That these things were going on as part of the ministry of our Lord Jesus made a clear statement concerning Jesus being the Christ. The people had been taught to watch for these signs, and they spoke for themselves of the divine power that Jesus possessed as the Messiah, the incarnate Son of God. After John the Baptist had been imprisoned by King Herod, John continued to direct others to Jesus. He sent some of his disciples to Jesus seeking assurance of Jesus’ identity as the Christ. Luke tells us --

Luke 7:20-23 “When the men had come to *Jesus*, they said, ‘John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?’” 21 And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight. 22 Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame

walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. 23 And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.’”

These were the works that Jesus did in God the Father’s name. These were the signs that clearly stated that Jesus was revealing Himself to be the Messiah sent from God. It couldn’t be clearer.

This is such an important lesson for us as well. Many today would question if these miracles ever really happened, or if they were fabricated by the disciples after Jesus’ death. They would challenge the reality of Jesus’ divine nature, and obfuscate the teaching of Jesus’ role and even identity as the Christ.

Jesus is the Christ! His works declare that truth clearly. When we put our trust in Jesus we are not misplacing that trust. He is the Almighty who is moved with compassion as He sees His people in distress and affliction. He cares and is surely powerful to save. What follows is a description of that salvation that Jesus brings to all who hear the plain truth which He declares.

II. He Gives Us Eternal Life with Him and the Father.

Our text contains these precious words of our Savior Jesus Christ.

John 10:27-29 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.

The Spirit has opened our hearts so that we hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. He knows us. He knows everything about us. He knows our needs. He knows when we are in trouble. He calls us to Him, and we know His voice. We come to Jesus, and He delivers us from every evil. He grants us eternal life. Jesus was very clear in stating what that means; “never perish.” You shall never perish! This mortal flesh and blood shall die, and the world will declare that we have perished! But the Lord assures us that we shall never perish, because He has already granted us the gift of eternal life.

Jesus told Martha upon the death of her brother Lazarus:

John 11:25-26 “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall **never** die.”

So we are taught by the Apostle to understand that “**this mortal must put on immortality**” (1 Corinthians 15:53). We are secure with the Lord. We shall never perish and no is able to snatch us out of the Lord hands.

Jesus has delivered us to the Father, and we are safe with the Lord Jesus and with His heavenly Father. We are safe from all enemies to our souls. We stay secure in the Lord’s hands by staying in His Word and hearing His voice and following Him, Then, no matter what may come our way in this life, we may be confident that Christ our Savior is with us, and remains with us forevermore. It doesn’t matter what comes. Nothing is stronger than the Lord and His love for us. So the Apostle Paul assures us by stating his own confidence of faith.

Romans 8:38-39 “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Then Jesus said it as plainly as it can be said:

John 10:30 “I and My Father are one.”

And with those words --

III. Jesus Clearly Proclaims His Divinity.

They got what they had asked for. They asked Jesus to tell them plainly if He was the Christ. It is not as if He hadn’t made it clear before, but with those words they understood, and still they refused to believe!

John 10:31-33 “Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. 32 Jesus answered them, ‘Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?’ 33 The Jews answered Him, saying, ‘For a good work we do not stone

You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.””

Instead of bowing before Him and worshiping Jesus as God and Savior, as the wise men did when Jesus was but a very young child, or as Simeon and Anna did when the infant Lord was first brought to the temple, they took up stones with the intent of killing Jesus. Jesus again reminded them of the works He did in the Father’s name, with the Father’s blessing. He challenged them to recall these works, asking them for which of these miracles which testify to His divinity were they going to stone Him. They rejected this line of evidence and maintained that Jesus blasphemed by testifying to the truth that He is one with God the Father.

This scenario would be played out again during Jesus’ trial before the Sanhedrin. This morning we read in our Passion History reading how Caiaphas asked Jesus if He was the Christ, the Son of the Blessed. Jesus answered plainly and truthfully declaring “I am!” and the high council of the Jews condemned Jesus to death.

Let us consider Jesus’ words, “**I and My Father are one**” (John 10:30), and now let us recall why this statement is so essential to the point in question, “Is Jesus the Christ our Savior?” To be the Messiah He had to come from God. Jesus had to be sent from God to be the Savior of the world! For Jesus to be that all sufficient sacrifice for sin He not only had to be pure from all sin, but He also had to be the sacrifice precious enough to pay for the sins of the whole world. Our salvation depends upon Jesus’ divine nature. For Jesus to be the Christ it was necessary for Him to be God incarnate. He is true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, and so He is my Lord!

This is the plain truth. It was presented by the Lord Jesus not only in response to those Jews who were challenging Him that day, but also for us who do hear His voice, and know Him, even as we are known. In plain language Jesus the Christ assures us that we are saved. He has called us to be His own, and this salvation is complete and eternal. We shall never perish, for Jesus has gained for us eternal life.

AMEN.