

WHO IS YOUR FATHER? John 8:37-47

15 Feb 2015

[Note: Preaching is a live event where God meets with His people, and that cannot be reproduced or duplicated. It is unique every time, and indispensable in the life of the Christian and the church. This is not a complete transcript; it is typically about 80% of the actual sermon. Some common abbreviations in these notes are: “ff” = and following verses / “NB” = *nota bene*, “note well” / “+” = an illustration / “→” = an application / “BTW” = By the way / “Cf.” = cross-reference / “I.e.” = In other words / “b/c” = because / “E.G.” = for example.]

Turn to John 8...

Give title...

Whenever I would visit my grandparents, who still lived in my Dad’s hometown, often I would get asked at church or around town: ‘Son, you look familiar – who’s your Daddy? Who’s your Papa?’ –

Some would even say, ‘You look like a Cantrell? Billy or Bill? (my granddad had a twin, and they were premies, and didn’t expect both to live!)

‘...Which of Billy’s sons – Ronnie, Wendell, Phil or Roy? (my dad had 3 brothers)...

Others would know immediately: ‘You must be Wendell’s son, you’re a spittin’ image.’...

Your family matters, your ancestry matters. – It says a lot about you. – It’s part of your identity, your heritage, your roots. –

For better or for worse, *your past* has a great influence on you. – We can fall off *either side* of this horse:

Some fall off the DARK side of their past – blaming all their problems on their forefathers, wallowing in self-pity, never moving past the ‘struggle’ of the past, always playing the victim, etc.

Others fall off the BRIGHT side of their past – boasting in their ethnicity, becoming arrogant about their culture, feeling superior, looking down on others, becoming snobbish and elitist about their noble roots, royal blood, etc.

That was the side the Jews fell off on, as they engaged in this heated debate here with Jesus in the temple. – They boasted that Abraham was their father, and God was their father.

The word “father” is found 16x in Jn. 8, and most of them here in vv. 37ff. – Jn 8 is all about family, spiritual family, ultimate family, eternal family. –

We could even entitle this sermon – ‘Parent Trap – how to ensure you don’t have the wrong parents!’

Stand, Read & Pray: often pray either 1:14,16, or 20:31...

Recall context – 8:30ff, those claiming to believe, claiming not only to have God as their Father, but Jesus as their Saviour.

YET, as we saw last week, vv. 31-36, they were still slaves to sin – not true disciples, not true believers....

Next we see, from vv. 37ff: True freedom all comes down to having the right father. – Wrong father = bondage!...

NB, before God, the world is divided into two groups – the saved and the unsaved, the children of God and children of the devil. – That is very true.

But before man, the world is divided into three groups, not two: There the unsaved, the saved, and the pretenders....

→And John's Gospel was written to ALL three groups. – Jn. 20:31...

The Holy Spirit has given us this book to call unbelievers to believe, to call believers to keep believe (to sustain faith), and to expose false believers...

Praise God for such a book! – What could be more important than this?!...

Now back to our text for today, Jn 8:37-47...

***THREE WARNINGS for those who think they are children of God:**

Ask the man on the street today, "Are you a child of God?"... Almost no one would say, 'Actually, I think I'm a child of the devil'. –

Yet according to Scripture, and based on the fruit we see in people's lives – the vast majority (whether claiming to be saved or not) are children of the devil. –

But they will only find this out once it is too late, once Satan has them safely home in Hades, locked in his dungeon forever, never to escape.

HOW can you make sure that doesn't happen to you?...

1. vv. 37-41a, Abraham is NOT your father. – Beware of relying on cultural & external privileges (incl. ethnic, historical, religious, etc.).

So deadly, and so common! – 'Oh, but I go to this or that church. Oh, but my parents this, my grandparents that. I come from this family, this culture, this heritage, this tradition, this school, this seminary, etc.

'I've been dipped, sprinkled, baptised, catechised, confirmed, membership, etc.

'I walked this aisle, prayed this prayer, had this experience. Oh, but I've spoken in tongues, been slain in the Spirit, received a prophecy, had a vision.

'Oh, but God miraculously healed my cancer, rescued me from a road accident that should've been fatal, pulled me out of a deep pit financially, etc.'

v. 33a, 37a – ‘Oh sure, you can hold up your birth certificate, point to your family tree, or introduce me to your parents & grandparents – to prove that you are Jewish ethnically, physically, externally.

‘But spiritually, internally, at the heart – you are a walking contradiction. Your life is a denial of everything Judaism is about, everything that Abraham stood for.’

Rom. 2:28-29, “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter, and his praise is not from men, but from God.”

Gal. 3:7, “...be sure that it is those who are of faith who are the sons of Abraham”

Gal. 5:6, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.” –

v. 37b – I.e., ‘Your heart is so full of seething hatred, that it has no room for truth. Your mind is so occupied with murder plots against Me, that you cannot hear what I’m telling you.’

NB, Christ’s Word “makes no progress, does not operate, finds no welcome, no room” in the inn of your heart, ‘it goes no where’!. –

God sends His truth knocking at your door, and you slam the door shut in His face.

Jesus is saying, ‘You boast of having Abraham’s blood in you, but you refuse to have MY word in you. You boast of being Abraham’s sons, but you hate Abraham’s God!’

→Terrifying: The SAME people who just “believed” in Christ in v. 30, are now rejecting Christ’s word moments later....

‘You wore My Word on your sleeve, you bought the T-shirt, you waved the flag. But in your heart there is no place for My Word whatsoever. What’s wrong with this picture??’

→Beware of the things you’ll end up doing if you do not have God’s Word in you. – ‘This Book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this Book’.

We have NO idea the evil potential of our fallen hearts without God’s truth. – You cannot imagine the depths of depravity & extent of wickedness that you are capable IF you expel God’s Word from your heart.

→*How opposite to this attitude is the heart of a true believer towards God’s Word:*

Col. 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”, be at home & find a warm welcome.

Job 23 – ‘I desired Your Word more than my daily food’

Jer. 15 – ‘I ate & devoured Your words – they were the joy and delight of my heart!’

v. 38 – ‘I have a Father and you have a father, but we do NOT have the same father. You are marching to the beat of a very different drummer, no matter how much you tell yourself otherwise.’

NB, *three sharp contrasts here*: Jesus’ ‘speaking’ and seeing’ “with” His Father. – Them ‘doing’ and ‘hearing’ “from” their father. –

I.e., Christ is saying, ‘My *word* best reveals who I am, your *deeds* best reveal who you are.

‘I speak what I have seen, firsthand *with* God in heaven, in the eternal fellowship of the Trinity.

‘But you, you are being fed lies “from” your evil father. You do what has been whispered into your ear by his hissssing, ssssssssssmooth voice.’

WHO is their other father, their bad dad? – Jesus’ still veils His language here, but not for long. – They have no idea what’s coming, what is about to hit them straight between the eyes.

v. 39a – I.e., ‘Don’t try and confuse us. We know who our father is! No other nation on earth can claim the rights & privileges we possess, as offspring of the great patriarch (Father Abraham).’

v. 39b – What were the deeds of Abraham? – Read Genesis:

Abraham listened and obeyed God’s Word, even offering up his own son Isaac on the altar. – ‘Here I am, Lord’, repeatedly!

Abraham received God’s messengers and paid attention to them – like when the angels came to warn about Sodom being destroyed. –

And as we’ll see in v. 56, Abraham anticipated Messiah’s coming. – In response to God’s promise, Abraham “believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ (Gen. 15:6)

Hearing & obeying God’s Word, trusting God’s promise – that’s what Abraham did. –

Were those the footsteps these Jews were walking in? – Hardly! – They were walking in some very differently shaped footsteps, headed into a much darker, more deadly direction.

vv. 40-41a – As Jesus taught often, “By their deeds, by their fruits, you will know them.” –

I.e., ‘Whoever your dad is, he has done a great job teaching you everything Abraham would never do:

Reject God’s messengers, refuse God’s Word, and murder God’s Son.’

John the Baptist said this exact same thing! – Turn to Luke 3:7-9...

I.e., 'Don't point to your ethnicity, point to your reality! Not your family tree, but your fruit!'

+ YET to this very day, rabbis will tell you, 'Abraham himself sits beside the gates of hell and does not permit any Jew to enter.'" –

Be born & circumcised in a Jewish home, uphold some semblance of being religious & law-abiding (wear a religious mask), and you've got your fire insurance, a free pass to Heaven, guaranteed!...

→BUT is Christianity much different today? – Professing believers by the millions, confident they are saved, yet showing no fruit in their life. –

Matt. 7 presents a horrifying picture of how history will end and the state of the Church when Jesus returns:

Matt. 7:21-23...

2. vv. 41b-43, God is NOT your father. – Beware of relying on spiritual & moral privileges.

This one is more tricky (though it overlaps). – It cuts even deeper. – You may not point to your ancestry, ethnicity, or any external privileges. – But you point to your spirituality & morality, and your doctrine & theology:

You compare yourself to all those pagans out there who bow down to dead idols. – 'I don't believe like they do OR behave like them! I go to church. I read my Bible. I pray.

'I don't swear. I'm not homosexual. I'm monogamous. I don't sleep around.

'I say grace before meals. I'm an honest person, I pay my taxes, I put in a hard days' work, I give to charity, I contribute to our neighbourhood.

'I'm not covered with tattoos and nose rings. I don't get drunk or do drugs. My kids are decent, my grandkids are well-behaved. I'm respected in the community.'

'And I know sound doctrine. I know my Bible, I can answer all the questions. And I know who Jesus is. I can refute all the cults, the evolutionists, the prosperity gospel preachers, etc.'

v. 41b – I.e., 'Jesus, we don't know what you're hinting at about our father. So let's set the record real straight right now: We are the chosen nation, the people of God – that is NOT in question, or up for discussion.'

'UNLIKE you, Jesus. It's not our father we're worried about, but yours! Who knows who *your* dad was? Your mother Mary sure made the rounds, didn't she? How's it feel to be a bastard boy?'

v. 42 – 'I beg to differ. Here is the highest test and final exam for knowing if God is your father:

'Do you love Me, His Son? Do you give yourself sacrificially and gladly to My service? Do you obey My commands?

'Do you trust My promises? Do you long to be with Me and with My people? Do you imitate Me and follow Me?

'All this is what it means to love Me.'

As Col & Hebrews tell us, Christ is the image of the invisible God, the brightness of God's glory, the express image of God's person. – Yet you do not love Him?

NB, again, v. 42c, they thought Jesus was some vain pretender, some self-appointed Messiah wannabe. – So He reiterates that He didn't sign-up for this mission, He was SENT by the Father, as THE divine Son.

Repeat: v. 42c...

→If words mean anything at all, no one can be a true child of God who does not love God's Son, Jesus Christ. – You cannot claim God as your Father if you will not have His Son as your Saviour!

+ MacArthur tells of when he was in seminary:

In Hollywood there's a large synagogue and a very famous rabbi. So I went to see that rabbi because I wanted to confront him with the claims of Christ, I wanted to talk to him about Judaism and Christianity.

...I thought I could just go in and have a sensible conversation with him and present to him the claims of Christ. And I went there, walked into his little office where he had all of his books and he was in there studying and his wife ushered me in there and he was sitting behind his desk and he greeted me and I greeted him and he sat down and I sat down.

And we began to talk about the Torah, and began to talk about Jewish history and it was going wonderfully.

And then I said, "Well, you know, Jesus Christ said..." – And that's as far as I got.

He flew out of that chair, both fists hit that desk where everything went...whoosh...just like that. He stood up and with fury in his eyes he said at the top of his voice, "Don't you ever mention that name in my presence," as loud as he could.

That's bitterness. Jesus Christ absolutely nauseated him, repulsed him. And there you have a little indication of what was going on in the minds of these Pharisees who had been devastated by Jesus Christ.

Repeat: v. 42...

→You can boil down the whole Christian life to this: loving Christ!

1 Cor. 16, "Let all who do not love the Lord Jesus be accursed."

Jesus to Peter, Jn. 21, 3x, 'Peter, do you love Me? Yes, You know all things, You know that I love You.'

Peter later wrote, 1 Pet 1, "though having not seen Him, we love Him"

~ Puritans, "An unfelt Christ is an unknown Christ." (And, "True religion consists largely in holy affections.")

→Communion tonight – why? – That we might never lose our "first love", that we might ever remember Christ and love Him more and more...

v. 43 – 'Why do you still not get it? What is unclear, what is confusing about what I'm saying?' – Answer:

Everything is confusing to the unbelieving mind. – Everything is unclear to the stubborn heart. – Nothing can be heard by those who plug their ears.

+ Some people say, 'The Bible just doesn't make sense'? – Because their heart is hard & their ears are plugged, because they love their sin and hate the Light that exposes it.

Repeat: v. 43...

→Know what people are saying who claim God as their father, but reject His Word? – They are saying, 'I'm God's street child - I'm His, but I live like I want, not under His authority or commands'. –

But God has NO street children, He is not that kind of Father!...

→Application from #s 1-2: In Christianised & religious areas, faithful evangelism requires us to shatter false securities, to strip away pretense and expose pretenders, just as Jesus does here & throughout the Gospels....

3. vv. 44-47, Satan IS your father – IF you rely on ANY privileges instead of Christ & His Word alone!

v. 44a – Now it's explicit, 'Read my lips: Your dad is Satan. You are not acting Abrahamic, you are not acting godly, you are acting demonic.

'Satan has a big family, with many offspring, and that includes you.'

v. 44a, PROOF that these were sons of Satan, not of God? -

Your "desires", v. 44a. – You want what he wants, you lick your lips and salivate over the same things that Satan craves.

WHAT is that? – What does Satan's perverted mind and his evil eyes most lust after?

v. 44b – The enemy of our souls specialises in two things: murder & lies. – That is his stock & trade, that is his very identity & nature to the core: killing & deceiving. –

WHO invented murder & lying? – WHO bought the patent & owns the brand? –

WHO is the mastermind & architect behind such a universally effective project (a global company with offices in every place)? – None other than the Devil.

(a) v. 44b, MURDER – “From the beginning” – Gen. 3 and the serpent in the garden is not just about craftiness and deceit, tempting Eve & Adam. –

Gen. 3 is also about a premeditated murder, a deliberate, malicious sniper who killed his victims with pinpoint accuracy.

The Fall is about a genocide – about Satan giving poison to Adam & Eve. – They drank it. – It killed them spiritually in an instant, and then physically thereafter. –

And that same poison of sin has infected every human that has ever been born since then. – No murder plot has ever been more successful than this one. –

Imagine Satan’s glee over such results – ‘I’ll inject a lethal dose into this one couple, and they will in turn inject that same poison into every one of their offspring and grandchildren and great grandchildren around the world, across the ages, without exception.’

Rom. 5:12, “Just as through one man, sin entered into the world, and death through sin. And so death spread to all men, because all sinned.” (cf. Heb. 2:14; 1 Jn. 3:8)

And so Satan’s murderous story kept unfolding. – Next, Cain killed Abel. – Then Nimrod boasts of killing a boy. – By Noah’s day, the earth is filled with violence & crime.

Up to the time of Christ, where these religious leaders are plotting to murder an innocent Jesus.

+ No arson, no serial killer, no inventor of super-virus epidemics,

no genocidal tyrant or mass murderer, no abortionist or executioner, could ever compare to Satan –

Dr. Murder himself, the Master Man-Slayer. – Never has anyone been this bloodthirsty or sadistic.

+ Recent book, *The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer* – An entire book about the history of cancer. – Written by a scientist & medical doctor – concluding in hundreds of pgs of fascinating research, this bottom line: *there will never be a cure for cancer because cancer is just being human.* –

I.e., there is something in us that is self-destructive in the end, that is corrupting us. – not a virus, not a germ, not bacteria, not a birth defect. – It’s just there, corrupting, killing us. –

We cannot sustain the perfection & health of that original body. We are all dying, sooner or later.

Sound familiar? – v. 44...

BUT that is only physical death. – Satan’s aim is much, much higher than that. – Killing bodies is child’s play for him. – He wants to kill souls, to bring eternal death.

HOW does he do that? – Through his best weapon, his most lethal device: lies. – Blinding you to spiritual truth, making you believe lies instead – about the Bible, about God, about Christ, about sin and yourself.

Nothing is more deadly than a lie – nothing.

(b) v. 44c, LIES – NB, the far greater emphasis in this verse, the root problem, the heart of the matter: Satan is the original con-artist, the “Father of Lies”, the Daddy of all deception. (Job 1:9-11; Matt. 4:6,9; Acts 5:3; 2 Thess. 2:9-11, etc.)

Because he has millennia of experience. – From Gen. 3: lying to Eve, “you will not surely die”, when God said, “you will surely die” (Gen. 2:17).

NB, vv. 44c, “does not stand in truth” – Lying is Satan’s natural habitat & realm. – He is at home when he lies, falsehood is like breathing for him. – It’s all we should expect from him, ever.

NB, v. 44d, Lying is Satan’s very “nature, character, native language”. – He doesn’t speak any other language. – He is not bilingual or trilingual. –

The devil tries to sound like it, but it’s always just lies, lies, and more lies, however he may dress them up in disguise and in half-truths. (he can only plagiarise truth, not think of it himself)

Repeat: v. 44...

→Most in the Western world today believe or act as if Satan is NOT a real, personal being that actually exists. – How Satan must love that! – What better way for him to complete his mission, than to convince people that he doesn’t even exist!

Yet Christ & His Word plainly show (see Boice summary, and/or my angelology notes/outlines??)... and he exerts a tremendous influence on the earth...

+ All that happened on Thurs. night on the Parliament floor came from one place & one person ultimately – Satan!...

→From our Decl. of Faith, Section #6, on “Satan”:

We believe that Satan is an evil personality, a created but fallen angel, the author of sin, the arch-enemy of God, and the great deceiver of man.

Yet Satan is also a defeated foe through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and he will be eternally punished in the lake of fire. (Gen. 3:1-7; 1 Tim. 3:6; 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Peter 5:8; Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10)

v. 45 – I.e., ‘True to your Satanic family, you are repulsed by truth. Christ’s truth is light exposing the darkness you love.

'If I spoke lies, you would welcome Me gladly. If I flattered your pride and fed your self-righteous egos, you would roll out the red carpet for Me.'

v. 46a – 'Name one thing I've done wrong, one time I lost my integrity, one sinful word or deed for which you could fault Me? Martial all your best charges, all your worst accusations, prove that I have been anything other than the sinless Son of God?'

'Oh, but here's what you can accuse Me of: speaking the truth. Guilty as charged, I declared God's truth about your sin and My salvation, and you rejected it. Just like the Satan who sired you, you love murder and lies. You are sons of the great Liar himself.'

+ Like Paul said to the Galatians (Gal. 4:16), "So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?"

→What a glimpse into the impeccability of Christ, the perfect purity of the God-man! –

What a proof that this indeed was God incarnate, the spotless Lamb of God, the only One qualified to offer the unblemished sacrifice for our sins.

v. 46a... NO other man in history, no other being on the planet, could make such a claim! (cf. v. 29 earlier) – Never was there a clearer conscience and a more squeaky clean life than this!...

v. 46b – People will believe the craziest things – in UFOs and aliens, in the wildest conspiracy theories, that we evolved from monkeys, that a man should marry another man, etc. –

ALL these lies, and many more, people will believe – but not the TRUTH! (Ps. 58:3; 62:4; Isa. 28:15; 2 Tim. 3:7; 4:4)

v. 47 – How could it be any plainer than this: Want to know if you are God's child or Satan's? – Want to know if your spiritual ancestry is from below or from above? – Simple test: How do you respond to God's Word?...

1 Jn. 4:6 (speaking on behalf of the apostles), "We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us."

→Few things mark a true believer more clearly than this: Do you have an independent desire for the Word? – Not a 'have to', but a 'want to'. – NOT just:

...at church, at youth, with parents, with friends, at small group, or in a crisis –

BUT an ongoing, real craving to know God better through His Word, to love Christ better through His Word!!...

+ Was one of the first proofs that God had saved me in 1989! – Not Mom asking me to get up; but me waking up!...

→Are you sensitive to God's voice (in His Word)? –

+ Jn. 10, "My sheep hear My voice and they follow". – Samuel, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." –

Mary in Lk. 1 to the angel after the stunning announcement – “Behold, the maidservant of the Lord. Be it done to me according to Your word.”

Ps. 119, ‘I open my mouth and pant, longing for Your commands. All through the night, I rise and give thanks for Your law. Oh how I love Your Law, it is my meditation all the day. How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey on my tongue.’

→In SUMMARY (and for small groups this week), Christ has clearly given us the two great tests of conversion – the two heart-searching, soul-penetrating questions:

(1) v. 42, Do I love Christ?; (2) Do I love His Word?...

Nobody is born doing either of these things! – Neither is natural. – Both require a supernatural work of God!...

CONCL. – Repeat 3 warnings...

→But wait: What if you realise you have the wrong father & are in the wrong family (Satan’s)? – How can you just change families? – Family is something you’re born into, right? – Isn’t it too late?!...

NO! – There is only one solution, as Jesus said to Nicodemus in Jn. 3, “You must be born again”. –

Only reborn, regenerated people get to start over in a new family, the right family, God’s family. – Only a spiritual rebirth can get you out of the demonic family and into the best of all families! –

Be born again and get a new, much better Father!...

Gal. 6:15, “For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.”

PRAY