

**Life in His Name – Part 22**  
**Who Belongs to God? – John 8:37-47**  
Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Intro:**

- This morning we are again turning to John, chapter eight, as we continue to dive into the discussion that has now become a dispute between Jesus and the religious leaders of the day.
- To set the stage again, Jesus had been doing miracles and teaching throughout the country, and people were discussing Him and debating who He was. Opinions were all over the place. At one end, there were those who worshiped Him as the Messiah, and at the other were those who wanted to kill Him as a heretic.
- In chapter eight, Jesus was teaching at the temple during the festival of Tabernacles to the gathered multitudes of Jews. Jesus claimed that He is the source of living water (7:37-39). He said: “I am the light of the world”(8:12). He claimed to be from above and not of this world (8:23). He told them that they would die in their sins if they did not believe in Him (8:24). He stated that He “always does what pleases” God His Father (8:29), and that as the Son of God, He can set you free from your sins. Who He sets free, is free indeed (8:36).
- These are profound and incredible claims and statements, and if true, have far-reaching implications with transformative power which requires reorienting one’s life around Jesus. Those listening struggled to understand what Jesus taught and claimed and how these things fit and applied to their thinking and themselves. They believed they were already “children of God” because they were physical descendants of Abraham. Jesus was addressing and correcting their thinking and theology on this.
- So, I will read our passage for this morning from beginning to end to see the flow of the conversation as a whole. Then we will return to the beginning and think through what is being taught in order to understand and apply this passage to our thinking and practice.

**John 8:37-47 NIV**

**I know that you are Abraham’s descendants. Yet you are looking for a way to kill me, because you have no room for my word. 38 I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence, and you are doing what you have heard from your father.”**

**39 “Abraham is our father,” they answered.**

**“If you were Abraham’s children,” said Jesus, “then you would do what Abraham did. 40 As it is, you are looking for a way to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. 41 You are doing the works of your own father.”**

**“We are not illegitimate children,” they protested. “The only Father we have is God himself.”**

**42 Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me. 43 Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. 44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 Yet because I tell the truth,**

**you do not believe me! 46 Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? 47 Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."**

- The debate at this point revolves around the subject of "who belongs to God?" This is where the title of this message comes from. And in this passage, Jesus pointed to five evidences or characteristics of those who belong to God which we are going to take a closer look at.
- Why is this important? For one, your eternity depends on whether or not you are a child of God, and the location and experience of your eternity will be vastly different depending on the answer to that question. Scripture tells us to "**Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves**" (2 Cor 13:5). These are the "test questions" we are to answer to determine if we are in the faith. Do not be self-deceived about your position and condition, and don't be blinded to the true spiritual condition of those you love and care for. Your answers to these questions will give you encouragement or reason to change, and perhaps cause you to pray differently for yourself and those you love.
- So let's now go back to the passage, take a closer look, and understand and uncover the five characteristics of evidence of those who "belong to God."

**John 8:37-38 NIV**

**I know that you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are looking for a way to kill me, because you have no room for my word. 38 I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you are doing what you have heard from your father."**

**Those who belong to God have room for the Word of God.**

- In the hearts and minds of those who belong to God is space for the word of God. There is an intentionality to "make space" for God's word within those who belong to God. There is a desire and hunger for the word that God speaks, and the truth and life and power of those words.
- To "have room" for His word, we have to remove and deflate our "knowledge" that has been "puffed up" (1 Cor. 8:1) with the yeast of our pride and our ignorance which are produced from the hardness of our hearts (see Eph. 4:17-21).
- How much "space" do we have in our minds and hearts for the word of God? Is God's word at the center of our minds and hearts, affecting our thoughts, passions, and actions? Or is it tucked into a box in a closet marked "Christianity" or "church" or "religion," only to be pulled out on special occasions like Christmas or Easter decorations?
- Those who belong to God have room for the word of God, and those who do not have room for the word of God in their lives do not belong to God.
- According to this passage and the teaching of Jesus, this is the first test of authenticity if one belongs to God. Here now, according to our text, is the second.

**John 8:39-41a NIV**

**"Abraham is our father," they answered.**

**"If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do what Abraham did. 40 As it is, you are looking for a way to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. 41 You are doing the works of your own father."**

**Those who belong to God do what Abraham did.**

- So we have to ask a couple of questions. Who is Abraham, and what did he do?
- Abraham was a man whom God made a covenant with and made promises to. God promised to make him the father of many nations and to bless him abundantly. God promised that kings would come from him (even though his wife was barren). And God made an everlasting covenant (see Gen. 12, 15, 17) to be God to him and his offspring.
- So what did Abraham do when hearing the words of God? Abraham *“believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”* (Gen. 15:6, Rom. 4:3, Gal. 3:6, James 2:23). Abraham not only had room in his heart for God’s word, but he also believed it. Then his belief was evidenced by how he lived his life. *“His faith was completed by his works”* (James 2:22).
- Now the physical descendants of Abraham through Isaac, the child of promise, are the Jews. The Jews thought that because they had the DNA of Abraham, because they were his literal descendants, that made them children of God. But Jesus, in this passage, said you belong to God only if you do what Abraham did.
- The apostle Paul picks up and unpacks this truth when he says,

### **Rom 9:7-9 ESV**

**Not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” 8 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.**

- What makes one a child of God is not being a physical offspring of Abraham, but a spiritual offspring of Abraham. You do not, by default, belong to God because you have Abraham’s DNA within you. You belong to God if you have the *faith* of Abraham within you. That is the faith of believing the word and promises of God.
- So Jesus said, if you were indeed a child of God and belonged to God, you would have believed Jesus because he spoke the word of God and is the word of God. Because they rejected Him, they proved that they did not belong to God.
- Now those listening to Him still made their objections.

### **John 8:41b-42 NIV**

**“We are not illegitimate children,” they protested. “The only Father we have is God himself.”**

**42 Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me.**

### **Those who belong to God love Jesus.**

- This is not having thoughts about Jesus nor mere knowledge of Him. This is hearing His word, believing in who He is, and loving Him. Do you love Jesus? Do you love Him more than anything or anyone else? Where does He rank in those you love? Is He your first love (Rev. 2:4-5), and your greatest love (Matt. 10:37-39)?
- These Jews were saying that because we are legitimate children of Abraham, God is our Father. Jesus said, well, if you were indeed legitimate children of Abraham and God is your Father, then you would love me, but because you do not love me, you do not belong to God. John wrote later to the church and reminded us of this teaching of Jesus.

### **1 John 2:23 ESV**

**No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.**

- You can't claim you follow the one true God if you reject the Son. No one can have the Father if they do not have the Son. Jesus is the "cornerstone" (Matt. 21:42, 1 Peter 2:7-8) of the family of God and also the "stumbling block" and a "rock of offense" to those who disobey and disbelieve the word and witness of Jesus.
- Jesus then explains to them who their father really is because they rejected Him.

### **John 8:43-44 NIV**

**Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. 44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.**

**Those who belong to God hold to the truth.**

- The devil once knew the truth but did not hold onto it. For a time, it must have seemed that the truth was in him, but this was a lie because he did not hold onto it. If you don't hold onto the truth, what you have left is a lie, and if you don't have God's life in you, all there is, is death.
- In John chapter ten, Jesus contrasts His purpose with that of the devil, who in John ten He calls the "thief."

### **John 10:10-11 ESV**

**The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.**

- If we do not hold onto the truth, then we hold onto a lie. By this evidence we indicate that we are then children of the lie and the liar, who is the devil. Those who are his children look to fulfill his will, which is to steal, kill, and destroy. But those who hold onto the truth from God are the ones who belong to God, and they have received life and aim to be agents of life everywhere they go.

### **John 8:45-47 NIV**

**Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! 46 Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? 47 Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."**

**Those who belong to God hear what He says.**

- Those who belong to God hear what He has said and continues to say. They are listening to Him all the time, reading His Word to hear what He says, paying attention to His voice when He speaks.
- This is an alive, active, and ongoing relationship. Not a one-time decision but an ongoing relationship. I am not talking about hearing voices in your head but reading the Bible with your heart open and asking God to speak to you. Speak to you He will. It is good for us to pray, and it is good for us to listen.
- Those who belong to God hear what He said and what He is saying.

## Conclusion

- How can you tell if you or others belong to God? Those who belong to God
  - have room for the Word of God
  - do what Abraham did
  - love Jesus
  - hold to the truth
  - hear what He says
- Again I ask you to “**Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves**” (2 Cor 13:5). If this description describes you, you have passed the test. If not, then ask God to give you the desire and the power to do His will.
- Prayer people and pray