

Trinity Sunday C, 2010

Text: John 8:48-59

Title: Keeping Jesus' Words

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Last week Jesus told you that if you loved him, you would keep his word, hold it on to it, treasure it, and that He and the Father would make their home with you. Jesus urged you to be keepers, and not to toss out or neglect His Word.

This week, Jesus tells you again to keep His word. And again Jesus makes a promise. Those who keep His Word will never see death.

Now this was too much for the Jewish leaders to take. They not only wanted to get rid of Jesus' words, they wanted to get rid of Jesus himself. They were ready to execute Jesus for blasphemy. They were literally picking up stones to throw at Him. This was mob justice.

Now we like to pat ourselves on the back and look down on these people, thinking, "I would never do something so horrible to Jesus. I would have believed in Jesus and followed Him. I would never have tried to kill Jesus."

But look at the situation. This is where Jesus most clearly identifies who He is. Jesus is not a mere man. Jesus is not just another teacher or Rabbi.

When Jesus says, "Before Abraham was, I am." Jesus is claiming to be God Almighty. Jesus is saying that He is the God that they've been worshipping all along. Jesus is saying that He is the one who created the world, who visited Abraham, who spoke to Moses in the burning bush, who lead the Israelites through the wilderness, who gave the ten commandments, who was worshipped by David and Solomon, who sent His people into exile, who appeared in the fiery furnace, who brought His people home. That God. That Lord. That "I am." That is who Jesus is claiming to be.

For the people this was blasphemy, something punishable by death.

Now if someone showed up today claiming to be God Almighty, the creator of Heaven and Earth, what would you do? I don't think we'd try to kill Him. We might ignore Him, we might ridicule Him, if He got to be too much of a bother we'd probably try to have Him committed to a mental institution, but I don't think we'd try to have Him executed.

But how do you treat Jesus today? Jesus still makes the same claims. Jesus still says, "I am God."

And how do you react?

Well, as long as it's not too much of a bother, we tend to humor Jesus. We listen to Him, and if we agree with Him, we'll do our best to keep His word.

But if Jesus starts saying things that are a little outrageous, a little strange, then we aren't so accommodating.

Jesus says to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. "But Jesus," you say, "those Muslims are out to kill us. And the illegal immigrants are out to take my job. And the drivers on the roads are always such jerks. I can't be expected to love all these people." And we go on and on making excuses not to love people.

Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me." "But Jesus," you say, "I know lots of really nice people who just aren't very religious. They don't go to church, but I know they're good people, surely Jesus there must be another way to heaven."

Jesus says, "This is my body, this is my blood." "But Jesus," you say, "It still looks like bread and wine to me, and you can't really expect me to believe that hocus-pocus stuff."

Jesus says, "God so loved the world, that He sent His only begotten Son, that whosoever believe in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." "But Jesus," you say, "How could God love me that much? I've done lots of terrible things. I don't even love myself most days. How could you love me so much that you would give up your only Son for me?"

The hardest words of Jesus to believe is not that Jesus is God, or that the world was made in six days, or that Mary was a Virgin or Jesus rose from the dead.

The hardest thing to believe is God actually loves you, and that He died to save you.

God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. And yet there are not three gods, but one God. That's the Trinity.

But the point of Trinity Sunday is not just to talk about how God exists and what He's like. We can start there, but it really doesn't do you any good at the end of the day, if God is just out there somewhere existing.

The point of Trinity Sunday is to see what each person of the Trinity does for you. How do you fit into the Trinity?

God is not just the Father, He is your Father. God made you. Every last detail of who you are—your body, your personality, your family, all of this was hand crafted by God Himself. You are unique, one of a kind, God's special creation.

God the Father loved you so much that He gave up His Son for you. God gave up the thing that He loved most for you.

And God the Son came. He came down to earth, became a human being, lived, suffered, died and rose for you, because He loves you. He didn't have to do that. But He wanted to.

And then He sent the Holy Spirit to comfort you, to strengthen your faith and to make you holy.

God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for you- to create you, to save you, and to sanctify you, because He loves you.

That's why God's Word is so important. In His Word, God tells you all these things. He reveals who He is and what He's done for you.

But it's more than that. God's Word is not merely information for you to learn and understand. Some people think of church like school. Once you learn everything you need to know, you can graduate and move on.

God's word is the way that God saves you and continues to work in you. You can never say, "I'm done with God's Word." Even if you read the Bible from cover to cover. Even if you memorized the whole book. Even if you know every little bit of Bible trivia. There's still more to Jesus' words.

Think about Jesus' words like food.

If you stop eating you will die. If you stop hearing Jesus' words, you will die forever.

If you limit yourself to a couple words here and there (John 3:16, Psalm 23 and Lord's Prayer, for example), you'll keep yourself alive, but you will miss out on the richness of all God's word.

The Bible is a banquet. There are more tastes and flavors and textures than you could ever imagine. Even here on Sunday mornings, we only get a sampling. Even over the course of a year, we barely cover the basic food groups.

Some Bible verses are like comfort food. It's great to keep coming back to them when you need to be encouraged, and we all have our favorites.

Don't be content just to sample a few favorites and keep coming back to them. Be adventurous. Try something exotic that you haven't tried before.

And don't dine alone. Take your family out to eat in God's Word in your family devotions. Get together with a few friends and sample each other's favorites. Invite your neighbors over to share in the good gifts.

Jesus' words nourish us and give us life. If you keep His words, if you hold onto them, if you hear them and taste them and treasure them, then Jesus will dwell with you, and just like Jesus, you will never die.