

Holy Trinity C, 2013

Text: John 8:48-59

Title: The Master Workman

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Today's gospel lesson begins and ends with a bang.

It begins with a bunch of name-calling. The Jews accuse Jesus of being a Samaritan and being possessed by a demon. These are two of the worst names you could call someone, short of swearing at them. And the way that they say it is even more demeaning. "We're right to call you these things, aren't we?" They've got a bit of an attitude.

And then it ends with them picking up stones to kill Jesus. They didn't have the authority to do so, but they didn't care. They were an angry mob and they're ready to do what it takes to get rid of Jesus, but He just ducks away quietly in the midst of the confusion.

So how did things get to this point, with all the name-calling and the lynch-mobbing? What makes the Jews so mad at Jesus?

Part of the problem here is that you're only getting the last third of this story. You don't get everything that comes before the insults start flying. When you go home tonight, read through all of John 8. It will take you about 3 minutes, and you will see what Jesus says to make the Jews so upset.

Here's the quick version.

Jesus tells the people that if they believe in Him, He will set them free. They tell Jesus, we don't need to be set free, we're not slaves to anyone.

Jesus tells them, if you sin, you're a slave to sin, but He has set them free. Jesus tells them, I'm doing what my Father has sent me to do, but if you're opposing me and what I'm doing, you're not true sons of Abraham, in fact you're sons of the devil. When you oppose me, you're not doing God's work, you're doing the devil's work.

And that's when they call Jesus a demon-possessed Samaritan.

The problem is that the people wanted God the Father without Jesus. They were happy to have God as their Father, but they didn't have any use for Jesus Christ, His Son.

Jesus told them that they if they didn't believe in Him, if they didn't keep His word, they would die forever in their sins. He told them that their only hope for salvation was to trust in Him, but they didn't want to hear that. They didn't want Jesus, they only wanted God the Father, because they didn't see themselves as sinful, they didn't see themselves as slaves, and so they had no need to be set free from anything.

That's your problem, too. You like God as your Father. God the Father is nice. He's just a kindly old man, a grandfatherly type with a white beard, a bit of a pushover who is nice and kind to everyone, kind of like Santa Claus. He's up on a throne in the sky somewhere and doesn't bother you if you don't bother him.

You like having God at arms-length, up there in the sky somewhere. You don't want a God who gets involved in your life. You don't want a God who comes down and shows up in your house or at your table for dinner, or when you're out on a date or hanging out with your friends. You don't want a God who tells you to make changes in your life, only a God who tells you that everything is fine, everything is okay.

You want a God, but only on your terms, you want a God who will take care of you when you need him, but will stay out of your life the rest of the time, a God you can come visit on a Sunday or a holiday, but who leaves you alone the rest of the week.

That may be the kind of God you want, but that's not the kind of God you've got. And that's actually a good thing.

You've got a God who comes down here and is involved with you and your life. You've got a God who became flesh and blood, a God who was conceived and born, who walked and talked and eat and drank and slept. You've got a God who didn't stay up in heaven, but came down to earth.

But even before that, even before Jesus was conceived and born, He was here, at work in the world.

God didn't simply show up one day to find a world already formed, already complete. Despite what some scientists will tell you, the world didn't just come into being on its own, explode out of nowhere.

The world was crafted, by hand, piece by piece. Genesis tells this story, but so does Proverbs.

Jesus is the Word of God, the Wisdom at God, at work like a master craftsman, shaping and forming every flower, every blade of grass, every atom and molecule. He created the outer structure, the heavens above and the oceans below. He laid the ground in place from the foundation up, and then carefully built the hills and the mountains. He filled them with plants and trees, fish, birds and animals of every kind.

And then God made you, the crown of His creation.

You are no accident of nature. You are not the result of random mutations. You were formed by the very hand of God Himself. Jesus made every tooth and toenail and still keeps the whole thing going.

And not just your body, but Jesus made your mind, your reason, your senses and even your soul, too. You didn't put these together all by yourself, but you are a handcrafted, one of a kind creation of God.

Every last piece, every decorative flourish was made by God, and he enjoyed it, he had fun making it.

Jesus says, "I was rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man."

The work of creation was not drudgery but a joy for Jesus. Picture the smile of happiness and satisfaction on a master carpenter's face as he puts on the last coat of varnish and steps back to admire his handiwork.

But creation did not stay the way that Jesus had made it. It didn't stay perfect.

Your sin has taken a sledgehammer to His masterpiece. Shattering it into millions of pieces, breaking and destroying everything that He carefully made.

The sin of Adam and all His children brought death and sickness and pain and suffering into this world. Your once perfect body doesn't work the way it's supposed to. Parts wear out and need to be repaired. Eventually the whole thing stops working altogether.

And so you deserve to have God keep you at arms-length. You deserve to have God turn His back on you and leave you all alone in the broken world that you have created.

But God doesn't leave you alone. God doesn't abandon you to death and brokenness. God comes back down. He becomes like you in every way except for your brokenness. He begins to put the pieces of His creation back together. He heals, He cleans, He even raises the dead.

But what did you do? Did you welcome Jesus with open arms? Did you help Him put the pieces back together? No! You preferred your broken world to His masterpiece. You wanted Him out of your life and out of this world all together. You loved your brokenness more than you loved the One who made you in the first place.

And so you killed Jesus. You nailed Him to a cross. You made fun of Him and you called Him names.

But God the Father raised Him from the dead. As hard as you tried to get rid of God you failed, and you failed gloriously.

Jesus Christ rose from the dead and ascended to God's right hand. And then Jesus sent His Holy Spirit to continue His work of putting the pieces of His creation back together.

And that's how God is involved in your life here and now. The Holy Spirit is at work in you, making you holy, shaping you back towards the perfect creation you once were. The Holy Spirit is working to rebuild you back into the masterpiece you once were.

The Holy Spirit has lots of Holy tools in His workbench- Holy Baptism, Holy Gospel, Holy Absolution, Holy Supper, all of these Holy because they bring God's Holy Word to you. These are the tools that Holy Spirit uses to repair you.

Sometimes this reshaping and renewing and repair that the Holy Spirit does in you is painful. Sometimes bones have to be re-set so that they heal correctly. Sometimes pieces need to be sanded or ground down before they can be fitted back together.

Trust in Jesus and the work that He is doing in you through His Holy Spirit. He knows you inside and out because He's the one who made you in the first place.

In fact, He made everything, and even after it was broken He came back to start putting everything back together. He's not quite done yet, but He'll be back soon to wrap up His work and make everything perfect and beautiful once more.