

I AM

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 December 2020

Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[0 : 00] If you have your Bibles, why don't you turn in them to John chapter 8.

If you don't have a Bible with you, there are Bibles in the pews that you can use. If you don't own a Bible, you can take that Bible home with you today as a gift from our congregation to you. It helps that you'll continue to be reading the Word of God.

John chapter 8 verses 48 through 59 will be the text for this morning's sermon. You know, we've been going through the Gospel of John verse by verse and chapter.

So today we will complete chapter 8. And then next Sunday, going through January and February, we're going to leave the Gospel of John behind for a couple of months to focus on a couple of things, a couple of questions.

First, what is the purpose of the church? And second, what is the purpose of church membership? And to begin that in early 2021, just to reexamine, what does Scripture say about what it means to be the church?

[1 : 09] What is so important about the church and what the church does? And why is church membership such an important thing as well? And so we'll be going through that in January and February.

And I encourage you to come to be a part of that, as always, with everything else that we're doing. So would you please stand with me now as we close out John chapter 8, reading verses 48 through 59.

The Jews answered him, Jesus answered him, Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon? Jesus answered, I do not have a demon, but I honor my father and you dishonor me.

Yet I do not seek my own glory. There is one who seeks it and he is the judge. Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death. The Jews said to him, Now we know that you have a demon.

Abraham died, as did the prophets. Yet you say, if anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death. Are you greater than our father Abraham who died? And the prophets died?

[2 : 18] Who do you make yourself out to be? Jesus answered, If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my father who glorifies me, of whom you say he is our God.

But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him, and I keep his word.

Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad. So the Jews said to him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham? And Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.

So they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? So again, we're wrapping up this chapter in John, and we'll leave this gospel for a time on Sundays as we shift to focus on the purpose of the church and church membership.

But this chapter, if you remember, has been a chapter where Jesus has been under attack. The Jewish leaders have assaulted him with a series of false accusations that they've levied upon his character and upon his identity.

[3 : 43] And while that has been happening in this chapter, as we've gone through this gospel, this book, verse by verse, we've seen that this has been going on for quite some time.

If you go back to chapter 2, when Jesus came into the temple and he cleansed it, from that moment, this conflict between him and the Jewish religious leaders has only increased and intensified as this gospel continues to unfold.

This chapter contains one of the most antagonistic exchanges that Jesus is recorded as having had with his opponents. And as has been the case, Jesus did not sit idly by while his opponents attacked him and accused him.

Instead, he parries their accusations. He counters their shots by delivering some of his own. However, he is not impurely motivated in doing this as they were.

Jesus, the Bible says, is the source of truth. And truth does not and cannot tolerate error. Therefore, Jesus stood his ground despite what persecution would await him for doing so.

[5 : 06] Have you ever noticed that it's only Christians? And when I mean Christians, I mean evangelical Christians, Christians who believe the Bible, that the Bible is the Word of God, that it's inerrant.

Have you seen that it's Christians like that, true Christians, who are the ones who are persecuted in our world and in our society? Have you taken notice of that?

Take notice of the fact that Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, even secular Christians, Christians who say that they follow Christ, but upon closer examination, you realize that they don't truly follow him probably because they don't truly know him.

None of those people, none of those religious groups are being persecuted in our society. Have you noticed that? And have you wondered why that is the case?

Well, the Bible tells us it's because of all these people, though they have many differences amongst them, these different religious groups, they share one major thing in common.

[6 : 24] And that is that they are false religions. They're false religions. And as such, the Bible says that they all belong to the same kingdom of darkness, ruled by Satan.

And a house, as we know, divided against itself, cannot stand. The ruler of the kingdom of darkness is Satan. And Satan cannot be divided in his objective, which is to attack the truth.

He is the father of lies, the Bible says, whose web of lies ensnares its prey whom he eventually kills. And those who truly follow Christ, who have been born again, who trust in his word, and who desire to obey its instructions, stand against anything that opposes that truth.

So it should come as no wonder that Christianity is being removed from public life, removed from public schools, and being removed from public discussion.

People are celebrated and encouraged to host and participate in different kinds of pride events or celebrations in their communities, even in their schools, and also in their workplaces.

[7 : 48] You won't find much resistance, if any, in our society towards anyone who wants to put on or host such an event.

But we do see that resistance. And you will feel that discouragement when in those same kind of settings you attempt to do something that shares or promotes Christian beliefs.

It's okay in our world to be sensitive to other religions, other opinions, other belief systems, just as long as they're not Christian.

We see that. Bibles have been set aside while references to Jesus Christ are being eliminated. The kingdom of darkness is at work to suppress the truth.

And when Christians come under such attack, it is a sign that they're doing the right thing. And Scripture says that as well.

[8 : 55] If we're under attack, then that means that we are doing something right. What's interesting about Jesus, though, is that His harshest opponents in His earthly ministry, His harshest opponents, were not the Romans.

Not those who were the governing officials or any other group that was a part of secular society. You know, for the most part, it seemed like they didn't really care about Him or for Him.

They were pretty much indifferent to Him, saw Him as a nuisance until He was pressed by His harshest opponents to crucify Him.

But His harshest opponents were those who belonged to the religious establishment. The self-righteous, the legalistic, the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

They opposed Jesus Christ at every turn. And in so doing, they revealed, Jesus would declare to them, that they were in league with the enemy of truth.

[10 : 09] Satan himself. That these men who thought they were so religious and holy were actually a part of Satan's kingdom of darkness. Jesus has already pointed this out as clearly as He could say it.

He said to them in this chapter, you are sons of your father, the devil. And in so doing, Jesus stated a truth that is startling for sinful mankind to hear.

That though all other religions claim to know and represent God, the truth is that they represent Satan.

Satan is their father. Which brings us to the main idea of this morning's message. Satan and those who belong to His kingdom dishonor and doubt Christ's true identity.

Those who belong to Christ honor and trust Him. Satan and those who belong to His kingdom of darkness dishonor and doubt Christ's true identity.

[11:38] Those who belong to Christ honor and trust Him. What you believe about Jesus, what you say about Jesus, and how you follow Jesus all reveal whether you are a member of His kingdom or Satan's.

In this passage, Jesus continues to unfold a truth. A truth that shattered the pride and the ego and the self-esteem of the Jewish leaders whom He was engaged in this debate with.

A truth that they would absolutely hate hearing. That truth was that although they claimed to be descendants of Abraham and children of God who they thought then were rightly representing Him, serving as His ambassadors in this world, that truthfully they were God's enemies.

Their father was Satan and they served as His pawns. Their religion was worthless to save them. In fact, it condemned them.

And so, if you're an unbeliever listening to this sermon this morning, what I want you to hear and what I want you to know is that God wants you to know the truth. God wants to transfer you from the kingdom of darkness into His eternal kingdom.

[13:07] God wants you to follow Him. And so, I hope that as we go along that you will be saved through the hearing of God's Word by the Spirit of God.

For believers, you have to understand that God wants you to be a truth teller. He wants you to be someone who stands for the truth while others run and hide and retreat or oppose it.

God wants you to be a truth teller and a truth sharer. We are called to go and make disciples. And in order to make disciples, we have to go and we have to speak. We have to tell and we have to share.

And in doing so, we also must defend the truth that God has entrusted us with. So, in this passage, Jesus provides us with three identifiers of those who belong to the kingdom of darkness.

Three identifiers of those who belong to the kingdom of darkness. First, is that those who belong to the kingdom of darkness dishonor Christ. those who belong to the kingdom of darkness dishonor Christ.

[14:20] Verses 48-52. So again, having just heard Jesus say to them, you are of your Father who is the devil, and having heard him explain that connection by uncovering the truth that they shared the same desires as Satan himself, which was to lie and to kill, because Jesus said, you desire what the devil desires, which is to lie and to kill.

And Jesus then points out earlier in this chapter, you want even to kill me. And so, having just had that part of the discussion, in verse 48, where we've picked up this morning, the Jewish leaders respond to what Jesus has just said.

And they say to him, are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?

Instead of giving serious thought to what our Lord had just said to them, and giving consideration to the demonstration of our Lord's authority and deity through his miracles to say such things, the religious leaders reverted to the age-old comeback of an elementary school child.

I know you are, but what am I? I know you are, but what am I? Saying in effect, oh yeah? You say or you think that Satan's our father?

Well, guess what? And then they sent the insult back to him, but they intensified it as, you know, elementary school students do.

[16:12] And our politicians do as well. They said, you are a demon-possessed Samaritan. Take that. Right? You think we're sons of Satan?

Well, guess what? You have Satan dwelling inside of you, and not only that, you're a Samaritan too.

When a person in a debate or an argument results to name-calling and attacking the character of the person they are arguing with, that is an indicator that they are losing the argument, and they know it.

Unable to deny or counter the truth that their opponent has spoken, they attack their opponent's character in an attempt to make them seem like they're untrustworthy.

So no matter how truthful their statement is, you can't believe it because they're not a trustworthy person. Just like in a court trial where the prosecution has an eyewitness to a crime, and they present that eyewitness on the stand, and they're going to give their testimony that they were there, what they saw, and everything like that.

And you know what the defense attorney will often do is what? Dig into that person's past. Find out some way that they can discredit them to say, yeah, well forget about whatever testimony they just gave to you because they're not somebody who you can trust.

[17 : 42] And so the religious leaders reveal that they belong to the kingdom of Satan because like Satan, they seek to discredit God who is the author of truth.

They were suggesting that Jesus was an unreliable source. And they did that first by saying that Jesus was a Samaritan. Now for us, we might understand what's so bad about being called a Samaritan?

Well, the Jews for centuries despised Samaritans. They saw them as belonging to an impure race. Samaritans were the descendants of Jews who had remained in the northern kingdom after its fall and then intermarried with pagans who were transplanted there by the Assyrians.

And so the Jews believed that the Samaritans were an impure people. And the Samaritans likewise hated the Jews for hating them so much.

Like today, similarly, how a staunch conservative would be angry to be classified as a liberal or a Democrat.

[18 : 56] Right? And vice versa. I don't want to be known as that. I don't want to be associated with that. I know like in pastoral circles like ours where to be called a liberal theologian would be like the ultimate pain to hear from somebody say to you, no, may it never be.

That is not who I am. And so it was a demoralizing thing for a Jew to call another Jew a Samaritan. In fact, the Jews hated the Samaritans so much that they refused to even step foot in their land because they thought it would defile them.

However, as we've seen through Jesus' example that he was no respecter of racial barriers. He first revealed, if you recall, his true identity to a Samaritan.

A Samaritan woman. And then later on, shockingly, when he told the illustration or the parable of what it means to be a good neighbor, who was the one that he used as an example of the good neighbor?

It was a Samaritan. By calling Jesus a Samaritan, though, the Jewish leaders were attempting to label him as being both impure, a false teacher, and a traitor to Israel.

[20 : 21] Therefore, that would have made him an enemy of the state. So what they're saying here as everybody's listening is you can't listen to this man and what he says because he's an enemy of the state.

He's an enemy of our people. They dishonored him by taking their accusations, though, one step further, suggesting that not only was Jesus an enemy of the state whose teachings would lead Israel astray, but that he also was, even worse than that, an enemy of God.

And they did that by implying that he was demon-possessed. He's an enemy of us, our nation, our country, our people, and worse than that, he's an enemy of God himself because he's demon-possessed.

And as we've read through this gospel, we've seen that that's a standard talking point for the religious leaders, isn't it? It's an attack that they often would resort to whenever someone refused to submit to their system of religion and their interpretation of Scripture.

They leveled that same slanderous accusation against John the Baptist. And they continually brought it before Jesus in Mark 3.22.

[21 : 36] It says, the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying he is possessed by Beelzebub. He is possessed by Satan. And in Matthew 10.25, they said, after Jesus had exorcised a demon, he cast out demons by the rulers of demons.

And the crowd followed their example, bought into their talking point. In John 7.20, we were there not that long ago, they said to him, you have a demon who seeks to kill you.

Later, when we get to John 10.20, the crowds are recorded as saying of Jesus, he has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to him? To suggest that someone was demon-possessed was to

charge them with the greatest dishonor that you could charge someone with in this culture.

It was tantamount to saying that a person was insane since demon-possessed people often acted insanely. And that they were an enemy of God.

Notice how Jesus responds to these accusations in verses 49-51. Look there with me. Jesus answered, I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father and you dishonor me.

[22 : 53] Yet I do not seek my own glory, there is one who seeks it and he is the judge. Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.

In Jesus' reply, we see how those of us who honor Christ should respond when we see Christ being dishonored.

In 1 Peter 2, Peter reminds us how to model Christ when we endure similar situations.

1 Peter 2, 20-23. For what credit is it if when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it, you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

For this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

[23 : 54] When he was reviled, he did not revile in turn. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

And so what we see here is Jesus calmly but boldly answering them. Once again, countering their error with the truth.

He revealed that his actions honored the Father. Unlike theirs. He revealed that his desire was for God's glory.

Unlike theirs. Jesus didn't exalt himself as the Jewish religious leaders did. He humbled himself.

And in so doing, he honored the Father who humbled, who exalted him because he humbled himself.

Philippians 2, 9 through 11. We were there just a few weeks ago. Therefore, God has highly exalted him, Jesus, and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

[25 : 14] Our culture dishonors Christ in many ways dishonors Christ. And dishonors Christians for upholding his righteous teachings and living by them and encouraging others to live by them.

So how should we respond to our culture who dishonors Christ in this way? Well, by honoring him. By honoring Christ.

Christ. By outdoing one another in good. By following his example of humility which means that we humble ourselves.

Which means that we love our neighbors as ourselves. It means that we put aside selfish desires, that we crucify our selfish wills.

that we live lives that seek not to bring us glory but glory to Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 10.31 is a great example.

[26 : 19] A great scripture that applies here. So whatever you do, so whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

In all things honor Christ. In all things honor Christ. This means in your workplace. How do we combat our culture that dishonors Christ?

We honor Christ in our workplace by being a trustworthy employee. You work hard. You give your best effort no matter the role or the task because employers notice things like that.

And in noticing it, they'll realize that your motivation isn't for a promotion or for the pay that you get but because you know that you are to honor Christ in all things.

And you honor Him in your workplace. And you'd be amazed how unbelievers pay attention to things like that. this means that you honor Christ in your home.

[27 : 29] Fathers humbly submit to Christ loving His wife as Christ has loved His church. And so in understanding that we know as men of God who are fathers who are husbands that if there's a sacrifice to be made in our household guess who's going to make it?

We're going to make it. And we're going to make it because we're going to honor Christ by doing so. And as we do that in giving honor to Christ what our wives and our children will see is someone whom they can trust.

And why do they know that they can trust us? Because they see that we are willing to sacrifice for them because we care more about their benefit than ours. And we do that. We will honor Christ.

Christ. And our wives will honor Christ. And our children will honor Christ. In a culture that dishonors Him. This means that we honor Christ in our church.

Workplace, home, church. When you come into this place or wherever we meet as a church to honor Christ means that your greatest concern is not for yourself.

[28 : 44] but it's for others. Your primary concern is what benefits the entire church. You desire that everyone within your church has a place where they can grow and learn and be disciplined and become more like Christ and feel like they belong because they do belong in the body of Christ.

In honor of Christ this means that we don't dwell on who has taken notice of you in the church or who has heard your concerns.

Honoring Christ in the church means you take notice of others. You think about how God can use you to serve them. This honors Christ.

Sometimes the result of this is persecution and we'll praise God if that is what results. But other times when the world takes notice of the church acting this way yeah they might persecute us or what might happen as we see in scripture is that they will honor Christ based upon how they see us honoring him.

Acts chapter 5 reveals the treatment the first church received as they sought to honor Christ. They were persecuted in that chapter but also they were honored by the people.

[30 : 16] Acts 5 12-14 Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people in the hands of the apostles and they were all together in Solomon's portico.

None of the rest dared to join them but the people held them in high esteem. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord multitudes of both men and women.

How can you honor Christ in this way? By being humble. What keeps a Christian humble? Well simply it's the cross dwelling frequently upon the humiliation that Christ endured for you to save you to sanctify you to complete that work in glorifying you one day.

You didn't deserve it but Christ by His grace willingly did it for you. So to be humble you must preach the gospel to yourself every day.

That God's love for you doesn't depend on your good works. It's all because of His grace. that He has humbled Himself by coming and adding human flesh to His deity and dying crucified between two thieves on a cross as He was crushed by the wrath of God for your sins.

[31 : 51] And through that His resurrection and His saving you He has transferred you from the kingdom of darkness which you and I all once belonged to to light by filling us with His truth and having His spirit indwell us.

Those who belong to the kingdom of darkness dishonor Christ but those who belong to His kingdom are always seeking to honor Him. Because they've been born again.

Because they have the Spirit indwelling them. Because they cherish His word and desire to keep it as evidence that they will never experience eternal death in hell because Christ has come and saved them.

For Christ endured for them hell on the cross that they could be saved. How can we not honor Christ? And so yes the culture will dishonor Christ that's not a surprise but may it never be said of us as they dishonor Him we continue to honor Him.

We continue to honor Him. Second here the second identifier of those who belong to the kingdom of darkness is that first they dishonor Christ and second they doubt Christ.

[33 : 24] Those who belong to the kingdom of darkness doubt Christ. Dishonoring Christ in a way I think produces doubt doesn't it?

The Jews rejected His claims and then they proceeded to cast doubt upon the claims that He had made. Look at verses 52 and 53 again.

There it says the Jews said to now we know that you have a demon Abraham died as did the prophets yet you say if anyone keeps my word he will never taste death.

Are you greater than our father Abraham who died and the prophets who died? Who do you make yourself out to be? So the point they sought to make here was to cast doubt over Jesus claim because Abraham just like the prophets they say they all died.

They weren't powerful enough as great as they were to overcome death. And so they had dishonored Christ by attacking his character and now they doubt his claims by taking an incredulous tone with him asking him in effect just who do you think that you are?

[34 : 46] Who do you think you are to tell us anything? But again as he had before Jesus calmly but boldly counters the error of their statement with the truth.

Continuing on Jesus answered them if I glorify myself my glory is nothing it is my father who glorifies me of whom you say he is our God.

They like many still today claim to know God. They claim to speak for God. But their treatment of Jesus exclusive claims to be the son of God and the only way to the father revealed that they weren't truly of God but we're actually a part of Satan's kingdom of darkness.

You know maybe you've heard something similar to this it's just said in a different way. And these guys thought that they were truly following God.

They thought that they really had the truth. They really thought that they were on his side. And Jesus reveals that no you're not. No you're not. And how do we see that today?

[35 : 57] Well I think we see it commonly in a couple of different statements. You've probably maybe said before. You've probably heard them before. Whenever we're talking about the Bible whenever we're talking about what the Bible says about Jesus and about God especially if it's talking about the cross or God's wrath towards sin or the reality of hell you know what you often will hear from somebody who claims to be a follower of Christ and claims to know God is something like this well that doesn't sound like God to me that doesn't sound like God to me or they might say something else like this that sounds like a God I can't believe in or I can't believe that God would do something like that whatever the case may be and you know what they're guilty of doing is exactly what the Pharisees were guilty of doing they were creating a

God of their own making they were creating a God in their image who agreed with everything that they agreed with right instead of having to humbly!

admit that you know God is right and I am wrong I am sinful and he is holy they would create a God that they were more comfortable with a God who accepts sin a God who is content with who they are and doesn't convict or judge anyone of sin but a God who does is a God they reject a God they dishonor and a God they doubt for through Jesus Christ who has revealed him to us Colossians 1 15 through 20 speaking of Jesus. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

For by Him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through Him and for Him.

And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.

[38 : 49] To claim to know God and to be pious in your religious observances, and even be really sincere in your beliefs. But to doubt that Jesus is truly His Son, and your only hope of salvation, means the truth that you claim to know is a lie. It's not true.

It won't save you because it can't. Jesus continues on in verse 55, saying, I know Him. If I were to say that I don't know Him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know Him, and I keep His word. So again, Jesus didn't back down in order to appease popular opinion or make His situation more comfortable. He steadfastly countered His opponents and reaffirmed that His statements were totally truthful. In contrast to their rejection of Him, the Lord told them in verse 56, Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day, and he saw it and was glad.

See, Jesus is the source of truth and the revealer of truth. And in Hebrews chapter 11, which is commonly known by us as the Hall of Fame of Faith or the Hall of Faith, Abraham is there.

Abraham's faith is extensively recorded in that passage along with many others, and there the Word of God reveals that Abraham's faith was rooted in God's promise. And though not all of those promises had been fulfilled in his earthly lifetime, that didn't cause him to doubt God in any way that they would be fulfilled and that this Redeemer, this promised Redeemer would one day come.

Hebrews 11, 13, These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. Abraham did rejoice to see the day and was glad. The religious leaders had the Scriptures, but they didn't understand them. They used them. They twisted them to honor themselves and increase their influence in society.

And they heaped dishonor and doubt upon anyone who attempted to take those precious things away from them, even God's own Son. So the Jews said to him in response, are you, you are not yet 50 years old, and have you seen Abraham? And so here their point is to again cast doubt over

what he said by referring to his age. Jesus began his earthly ministry around the age of 30 years old or so. And so the doubt that they cast here upon his claims, again, had to deal with his youthfulness, saying, in effect, you are too young to have seen Abraham, and you're also too young to tell us what to do. You don't have any wisdom in your youth to be able to tell us anything. That's a problem in the church at times, isn't it?

Such a problem that Paul had to encourage Timothy, a young pastor in 1 Timothy 4, 12, let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. You know, I'm 38 years old, and that's a strange age because to some people, I am really young, right? And I understand that. And you hear those comments. And if you remember, a lot of you are younger than me or my age or older than me. You remember being around this age and how you know, you were seen as being really young by those who were older than you. However, to those who were younger than you and teenagers, 38 is old, you know? I remember making that transition in the youth group where it was like, okay, you know, cool. He's close to our age. And then all of a sudden, starting to hear the comments like, you're old. You're old. And that was hard for me to hear. So it's kind of nice being 38 because depending on who I am, some people think I'm really young. That's nice to hear. And some people think I'm really old. That's also kind of nice to hear sometimes too. But they cast a doubt over Jesus because they said basically, you don't have enough wisdom. You don't have enough life experience. You're not old enough to tell us what to do. [43 : 49] And you know, we'll encounter that in our culture too, won't we? By those who doubt Christ. And maybe it won't be about your age, but it will have to do with your life. They'll be like, well, you've not really lived a life like I have. You haven't experienced the things that I have.

Who are you to tell me about my need to ask God for forgiveness or sin or salvation or anything? But whatever the case may be, we can't let that deter us from speaking the truth.

How do we counter the doubt of the world? Well, we counter it by speaking the truth that we know in Christ and setting an example through that to the world. And we'll better be able to communicate truth by filling our minds with the truth of God. Think of the helmet of salvation dwelling upon God's word daily, abiding in it, that his truth would be ever present on your lips and your tongue.

Those who belong to the kingdom of darkness dishonor and doubt Christ. And as a result of that rejection, the third identifier here is that those who belong to the kingdom of darkness will die in their sins. They will die in their sins. Dishonoring him, doubting him, leads to one dying in their sins. In these verses, we reach the climatic conclusion of this exchange between Jesus and these Jewish religious leaders. But again, we see Jesus doesn't back down, not even an inch. In fact, he takes it up another notch, revealing a great truth to his opponents once more. A truth that will incite a violent reaction within them. Verse 58, Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.

This was a different and a specific claim. Or I should say this is as specific as a claim that Jesus could have made to his divine origins and essence. There was no doubting here when these religious leaders heard it, what Jesus was insinuating. He was saying, I am so much more than Abraham. I am so much more than a prophet because when he says, I am, he uses God's own name.

[46 : 43] Yahweh. In the Greek, ego ami. I am. No doubt about it, he is using that name in reference to himself saying, I am God. Jesus is God. Jesus isn't just a buddy to pal around with. He isn't just a therapist.

He's not some kind of self-help guru or a motivational speaker or a mystical genie or an angel or another God, lowercase g. He is the God.

A claim he makes repeatedly in his word. You can't truly have Jesus and not know him as God. He will not permit that. But instead of acknowledging this truth as evidenced by his many miracles, even after his great miracle of resurrecting from the grave, having defeated death, the Pharisees still wanted nothing to do with him. And in this case, they once again showed their true desire, which was to kill them. In verse 59, they heard this amazing truth and their reaction was to pick up stones, to pelt him with those stones until he died. But Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple. You see, if Jesus is God like he claims, that means that they will one day have to answer to him as their judge. And that's not a comfortable thought for sinful people to think about. So instead of acknowledging Jesus as God, they deny his and God the Father's existence altogether. Because if they have to acknowledge that, then they know that they're sinful and they are going to be judged. So instead, they try to twist his words or deny the truth to silence their consciences.

The Pharisees picked up stones to kill Jesus, but his time had not yet come, though later it would, and they'd be successful then. Though in doing so, they would merely be accomplishing God's will in it.

And because they rejected Christ and dishonored him and doubted him, they would die in their sins and suffer eternally. In this moment, Jesus departed from them, but a moment was coming when they would be the ones whom he would send away in judgment. That time of judgment is coming. And Jesus talked about it many times. Matthew 7, 21 through 23 is one of those times. Now hear this. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

[50 : 18] On that day, and this disturbs me. Many. Many. Not just some or a few. Many will say to me, Lord, Lord, using his name, acting as if they knew him. Did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name? And then will I declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.

Are you ready for that day? Are you ready for that day? Does your life indicate that you honor Christ and that you trust him completely, totally for your salvation? Or does it reveal the opposite, that you dishonor him, that you dishonor him, and that you doubt him? Now, maybe there are some of you listening and you're indifferent. And you feel like, well, I don't honor him, but I don't dishonor him. But let me tell you that indifference is the same as rejection. It's just not as strong, but it's the same as rejection. And we will all be present on this day. You will be present on this day.

And without Christ, without knowing him and trusting in him as your Lord and Savior, not trusting in yourself, not trusting in your good works or anything else, without knowing him as your Lord and Savior, you are a member of the kingdom of darkness.

And you will die in your sins. And you will suffer eternally. But there's good news. That God is able to make transfers.

[52 : 32] He's able to transfer you, who realize that you're in the kingdom of darkness today, into his kingdom. Again, if you repent of your sins, and if you trust in him, he will give you his spirit.

And you will walk in newness of life. Now, in trying to figure out how to end this sermon, I thought of Colossians.

And I've been in Colossians in my own personal Bible study time for a while. And Colossians 1, 9-13 in particular is one that I've spent a lot of time dwelling upon.

In fact, I've been praying through it. And I try to do that every day. I'm not as good as I would like to be. But I'm presenting that scripture to you this morning.

And I'm challenging you in our application. We don't have application questions. The application is commit to praying through Colossians 1, 9-13 for our church this year.

[53 : 44] Because listen, we know we live in a world of people who dishonor and doubt Christ. trust. And we know that we've been called by Him to go and make disciples.

And in doing so, we must honor Him and trust Him. And we must go and make disciples. And so, I love Paul's comments here, getting inspired by the Holy Spirit, but what a beautiful thing for our church to set as our goal for one another in this coming year that we, in our honoring and trusting Christ, would go and make disciples of those who right now are dishonoring Him and doubting Him. I want to read that passage with you. And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

And so, as I've been going through this and praying through this, this is what I've been praying for you, Lord, and for me. Fill us with knowledge. Give us wisdom and understanding so as to walk in a manner worthy of you, fully pleasing to you, bearing fruit for you in every good thing, increasing in our knowledge of who you are, being strengthened with your power according to your glorious might that we would endure with patience and with joy, whatever you would have us go through, giving thanks to you in all things who has qualified us to share in an inheritance that we have not deserved as saints who walk in your light who have been transferred out of your kingdom of darkness.

And so, I encourage you. Will you be praying through this passage with me for our church? I hope that you will.

[55 : 35] Let's pray together right now. Lord God, we acknowledge that as believers whom you have saved, that the sin nature remains and we are tempted and we have said and done things that have dishonored you and caused us to doubt.

but God, we're thankful to know that you are rich in mercy and grace and forgiveness, that you forgive us, that you cleanse us through the reading of your word.

So God, we pray that as your church, as your people, we would honor you, that we would honor you in every place that you put us, in our workplaces, in our homes, in our neighborhoods, and in our church.

That we would trust in you in all things, no matter what circumstances that we might be facing, no matter what the difficulty may be, Lord, that when people see us going through hardship, that they would see that our faith and our trust in you hasn't wavered one bit, but is actually increasing and growing and strengthening.

God, we pray that you would use us as your church to accomplish your will. We pray that collectively we would honor you and that we would honor you by fulfilling the task that you've given us to do, to go into our community, to share the good news of Jesus Christ, to make disciples, and to teach them to make disciples as well.

[57 : 25] God, we cannot do this in our own strength and our own power. It has to be you and your spirit. And so, Lord, we pray that we would be willing instruments that you would use to do great things for the glory of your great name.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you.