**I Came Not of My Own Accord**

**John 8:42-59**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Jesus said in our Gospel lesson, “I came not of my own accord.” And why did Jesus come not of His own accord? Because the Father sent Him! He sent Him for a purpose.

This is not the first time God “sent someone, not of their own accord.” Take a close look at our old testament lesson. God calls out to Abraham to test him. , “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

What did Abraham do? He ran off to Tarshish hoping to hide from the Lord? Ooops, that is what Jonah did. He hid in the mountains? Oh yeah, wrong guy, that was Elijah. But both of them also went where God sent them, but not of their own accord.

Abraham rose early in the morning to take his son Isaac for the burnt offering. Do you think he came to that mountain of his own accord? Do you think it was his desire to take this son – the one born to him and Sarah in their old age, the son for whom he had waited so long – do you think he went up to this mountain to sacrifice his son to God of His own accord? But God sent him.

How about Isaac that day? Do you think Isaac would have gone willingly with his father had he known that he was the sacrifice? Would he, of his own accord, have carried the wood upon which he was to be bound up that mountain? He did ask his father where the sacrifice was, so you know he was curious about what the sacrifice was going to be. He knew what other peoples did in the surrounding region, for it was common practice to sacrifice a firstborn son. Did he look at his father, the wood, and the fire and wonder, “am I the lamb being led to slaughter?”

Did Isaac, have any clue that when his Father told him it was going to be a lamb that God would provide, that it might be himself? Maybe, maybe not. He did not come up to that mountain of his own accord ***to be a sacrifice***.

People have asked me what moved me to be a pastor. I had thought about it in high school, college, and was planning to head to seminary. But I always found a reason to put it off. Pauline and I got married, and we accepted calls to teach in Southern California in order to teach to pay off her student loans as mine would be deferred as a fulltime student, and so hers would not be a burden while I was technically unemployed while a student at the seminary. We were teaching out in California, and one year led to another. People of the congregation where we were teachers encouraged me to be a pastor, so I applied at both seminaries and was accepted.

But, I did not commit to attending. I was waiting to commit. I used the excuse that we were waiting for Pauline to have a teaching position in either St. Louis or Ft. Wayne before I committed. Month after month passed! At one school board meeting in the Spring, we were told that we were being let go, we were terminated. We were told that I need to go to the Seminary. They needed to start immediately if they were going find two teachers to replace us. You see, Pauline and I were two of the entire teaching staff of three – and I was also the principal.

Pauline was eventually called to teach at Zion Lutheran in Ft. Wayne within a few weeka after this, but to say it rightly, I went to the Seminary not of my own accord. God used people to send me.

I was assigned a vicarage in Onekama, Michigan. But when Pauline and I had previously been interviewed about what kind of area we would like to go, we had expressed that we wanted a bigger city setting. My placement was a dual parish in a town the size of Embarrass (with a small grocery store) on the shores of Lake Michigan. We went not of our own accord. But God sent me.

At the end of my Seminary education, I was certified for placement into a congregation. Again we met with people who asked where we would like to go. Naugatuck, Connecticut is nowhere near where we were hoping to go. It was closer to where a friend wanted to go, and where he was sent would have been wonderful for us… so we thought at the time, but we went, not of our own accord. But God sent us. He and I were used by God where He sent us, and we also grew in faith and understanding.

Now we are here in Embarrass. I can only think of God speaking to Ezekiel:

*“Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with my words to them.**For you are not sent to a people of foreign speech and a hard language, but to the house of Israel— not to many peoples of foreign speech and a hard language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, if I sent you to such, they would listen to you. But the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me: because all the house of Israel have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart. Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces, and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. Like emery harder than flint have I made your forehead. Fear them not, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house.” Moreover, he said to me, “Son of man, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears. And go to your people, and speak to them and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God,’ whether they hear or refuse to hear.”* (Ez. 3:4-11)

Ezekiel went to God’s church, the people of Israel. They did not like what he had to say, they did not want to hear God’s Word to them. Ezekiel went not of his own accord, but God sent him.

So I came here, not of my own accord, but God sent me. He did it through you – in that day, Zion and St. Peter extended a call to me to be your pastor. Through you He called me to speak the Word of Christ to you – whether you hear or refuse to hear.

In our Gospel lesson, Jesus cuts to the quick about things.

*“If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”* (vv. 42-47)

Jesus was continually teaching them. He had come to Jerusalem for the Festival of Booths so that He might teach the masses that the deliverance out of Egypt and the bestowal of the land of Canaan point to the deeds of God’s Messiah. They point to Him! They point to how Messiah would erect His booth among men – not a tent made with hands, but the booth of His flesh, of His own body. God tabernacles with men in His flesh, just as He inhabited the tabernacle in the midst of Israel in ancient times.

Jesus had also taught that Messiah – He Himself – is the true bread that came down from heaven, upon which believers will feast for eternal life, to be fed in body and soul for life in our wilderness journey in this mortal coil. This is just as in ancient times the Israelites were fed manna by God in the wilderness.

Christ proclaims that His teaching, His doctrine is from God. He declares to them that He is the light of the world, and that only in Him is a person freed from sin. It is only in Jesus that one comes to the Light of Life, walks in the Truth, and is kept from eternal death.

This is what Jesus has taught, as it is presented by John in the chapters preceding our text. But the people did not want to hear it, the chief priests and leaders of the church did not like what Jesus had to say.

*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! Who do you make yourself out to be?"*

In this place and others, they claim Abraham is their father. “We’ve been members of this church for generations. We live according to what our father’s have handed down.” They claimed their works, their righteousness, their deeds in keeping with the Law given through Moses are their salvation. Their blood line and their works is where they place their hope for eternity. And they do so, claiming that the heavenly Father is their God.

Who has kept the Law? None of the Jewish leaders in Jesus’ day! Even Moses had been disobedient to God. Abraham as also not without sin. Abraham proclaimed to Isaac that God would provide for Himself the Lamb for a sacrifice – the sacrifice that Abraham knew would allow him to return back with Isaac alive, even though he had obediently sacrificed him to God. He prophesied of Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

This is why Jesus proclaims that their father Abraham rejoiced to see His day, the day of Messiah, and was glad. He saw it on the mountain as the Lord provided the sacrifice for sin – the ram available that day, but God provided the Lamb that Isaac’s life was spared.

This is the very same mountain which we today call Golgotha. Christ is the Lamb sacrificed as the offering which grants life to Isaac. Christ is the Lamb sacrificed to pay for sin. Christ is the Lamb who is slain as the sacrifice by which those who believe have eternal life. Those, who like Abraham, have faith in the One who was to come, Who has come, and Who will come again – that is, those with faith in Christ have seen His day and are glad.

Christ did not come of His own accord, but was sent by the Father as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the World.

Christ came on your account – He came to free you from sin and death.

Christ came on your account – to purchase you forgiveness and to grant you life.

You do not come of your own accord, you are drawn here by the Holy Spirit’s guiding that you might be strengthened in body and soul to face all the days that lie before you Indeed, those days are perilous! But you do not face them alone. You do not face them alone, for Christ is with you, He fills you with Himself, for He has promised to do so. Here is where Christ comes, and He comes on your account.

Christ comes on your account – to deliver what He purchased.

Christ comes on your account – to speak a word of comfort and peace into your ear.

Christ comes on your account – to feed you Himself, the bread of heaven.

Christ comes on your account – to give you to drink of His blood unto life everlasting.

Christ comes on your account – to strengthen and keep you in all things, even in these days of COVID-19, unto life everlasting. In the name of Jesus. Amen.