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Holy Trinity Sunday
June 15, 2025
Text: John 8:48 – 59
Title: A Familiar Scene

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. It's a familiar scene. Monday evening rolls around, the kids are home from school, and mom and dad are home from a long day of work. Mom calls out that dinner is ready, and they all come into the kitchen for a meal of spaghetti and meatballs, everyone's favorite. They all sit down in their respective chairs and dig into the freshly prepared food. At that point, mom and dad know that they can't keep it from the kids any longer. Mom announces that things will have to be different for a while because dad was laid off from work that afternoon.

A different place at another time, but again, it's an all too familiar scene. The night had started out like every other one that the friends had spent together. The three couples got into the van to head into the city for a night of drinks, food and fun just like they did every month. The restaurant this time was a little Greek place that they had heard about, and everything was as good as promised. It was the drive home that they didn't count on. The drunk driver was going east in the westbound lane with no headlights on, and the van slammed into it at about 65mph. Both vehicles were crushed, the passengers in the back of the van were severely injured, and the couple in the front of the van were now the concern of the county coroner. The drunk driver was arrested and placed under guard as he was taken to the hospital for his minor injuries. He would never be the same with the guilt over what he had done.

Another time and another place, but you can probably guess that the scene is familiar. The group seems to be gathered around a single man. There is nothing remarkable looking about Him, but everyone is listening intently to what He is saying. The people in the group are dressed

in the customary robes and sandals of the day, but some of them are obviously richer than the others. The crowd is noticeably angry with the man that they are talking with, but it doesn't stop Him or intimidate Him from continuing the heated conversation that they are having.

Finally, they accuse 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 taste 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! Who do you make yourself out to be?"

Today's Gospel reading is definitely a familiar scene to anyone who knows about the life of Jesus. He was constantly challenged by the rulers and authorities of His day because of how He taught, what He taught, and because of what He said about Himself, and this situation from today's Gospel reading isn't much different. In fact, throughout most of chapter 8 John is giving us a detailed account of this particular confrontation, and we need to know the context.

This confrontation all started with, you've probably already guessed it, a familiar scene. Jesus was in the temple once again, and He began to teach the people by declaring that He is the Light of the world. This is a statement that any Jew in Jesus' day would have taken for a clear and obvious Messianic claim. Of course, there was the expected opposition from the Pharisees to His Messianic claim, but Jesus was still able to persuade many people to believe in Him. It was to these people who believed that Jesus said, "...you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." But these new believers in Jesus didn't like hearing that because they declared – probably more than a little indignantly – that they had never been slaves of anyone. What did

they have to be set free from? But Jesus countered that claim by telling them plainly that anyone who sins is a slave to sin, and all slaves to sin need the Son to set them free.

Jesus knows that His words are making them furious, but He continues speaking to them because they need to hear the truth. They need to hear God's Word of truth spoken to them and for them, even if they don't like what they're hearing. He tells them that their claim to innocence means nothing because they want to kill Him. As this heated conversation continues throughout John chapter 8, Jesus describes His relationship to the Heavenly Father. He does this as He tells the people who want to kill Him that their father is the devil, himself, and that's why today's reading opens with these people – who had just been described as believing in Jesus a few short verses before – responding to this judgment from the Lord by saying that Jesus must be possessed by a demon. It's a common tactic that's still used today, if you don't like the message that you're hearing, don't bother attacking the message. Attack the messenger. Anyone who follows politics will see this tactic used regularly.

This familiar scene could just as easily have happened in this day and age. People don't much care for the truth of God's Word when it confronts them. After all, who wants to be told that they're a sinner? That fact doesn't make you feel good, and isn't that why you go to church, to feel good about yourself after it's done? People such as Joyce Meyer and Joel Osteen and many others have made fortunes by telling people what they want to hear in the name of religion. Joyce Meyer, a former member of our Lutheran Synod, now says how terrible it was that the confession of sins was a regular part of the worship services that she grew up with.

There is nothing new about this. It's a familiar scene. In the day of Jesus, the Pharisees in particular were sure that they managed to live without sin, and by this account it was clear that they had many of the people believing the same thing. And in today's world, this is still pretty

much the prevailing attitude. When asked, most everyone will answer that they believe that “...people are basically good.” It’s this mistaken belief that allows people to think that bathroom laws can be changed throughout our country to allow a man to go into a woman’s bathroom with no risk of predators taking advantage of such misguided laws. The biblical truth that people have a sinful nature that is an undeniable part of who they are isn’t believed by most people today. And when you won’t see the sin in yourself that God’s Word clearly describes, then you don’t see the need for a Savior.

When we don’t like the truth that we are hearing, then we will typically do one of two things. The first option, which I’ve just described, is to deny the truth altogether. The second option is to not only deny the truth, but to try and twist it into something that we like more instead. When the truth of God’s Word is denied and then twisted, all sorts of false teachings can arise. The origin of Christianity’s longest confession of faith which we just said together, the Athanasian Creed, is a good example of option two. This Creed was originally written to correct false teachings from a man named Arius. He denied the truth that Jesus really is God even though Jesus declares Himself to be “I Am” in this very Gospel reading. It was a declaration that nearly got Him executed for blasphemy. It’s a declaration that people still try to deny today, from the Jew to the Muslim to the Jehovah’s Witness.

But by denying Christ’s Divinity, this false teaching denies the Holy Trinity. There is no Christianity without the Divinity of Jesus or without the Holy Trinity, and that’s one of the main reasons that we celebrate the Trinity today. In the Trinity we find our faith and our salvation through the grace, love and mercy of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

From the beginning of time, it has been the entire Holy Trinity, using its infinite wisdom as the reading from Proverbs describes, that has created the world and then worked for the

salvation of that same world. The Trinity called Abraham to begin the chosen nation of Israel, and it was the Trinity that confronted Pharaoh in Egypt to lead Moses and that new nation out of slavery and to the Promised Land. The Triune God placed King David on the throne, and then made him the descendant of the Messiah to confirm the everlasting royal bloodline that was promised. Our reading from Acts talks of the greatness of David, and then it declares that as great as King David was, Jesus the Christ is even greater.

Both the Gospel reading and the reading from Acts state that Abraham, the prophets and David all succumbed to death in familiar scenes, and each of them has remained in their respective graves. Jesus died in yet another familiar scene that we have just finished celebrating, but He did not remain in His grave. He did not lose to death, but He defeated it for us.

Because He knew that He would defeat the death of the body, Jesus was able to promise that those who believe in Him and the Father would not taste eternal death at all. That is the hope and promise that we cling too in our faith. The promise from the Triune God that faith would be given as a free gift to us all through the work of the Holy Spirit. The gift of faith given in Holy Baptism binds us to the cross of the Son and to His resurrection, and the Father forgives all of us for our sins because of His Son's perfect sacrifice. Through these miraculous works of the Trinity we live in the hope and comfort of His love and protection, and we are given the ability to live a life that is pleasing to Him. Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.