

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Fourth Sunday After Trinity, July 5, 2020

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)
Hymns: 539 (524:7) 16, 367, 355
Lessons: Exodus 3:1-14; Acts 16:12-15; Mark 8:34-38
Sermon Text: John 7:14-18,
Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Dear friends in Christ:

The Bible tells us a most peculiar truth about the Jews and Jesus. The Jews were God's chosen people. They, as the descendants of Abraham, were chosen by God to receive the promise of a Savior from sin. This promise was repeated to them often and clearly. Finally, this promised Savior was born in their nation. They could see him with their eyes and hear his preaching with their ears. In him all the prophecies of the promised Messiah were fulfilled. And yet, the Jewish religious leaders and the majority of the people utterly rejected him and his preaching. In the Gospel of John we read: ***"He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him,"*** John 1:10-11.

Our text tells us how the Jews challenged the right of Jesus to teach and then the testimony Jesus gave of himself. May the Holy Spirit guide us as we learn about:

THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF JESUS AND HIS DOCTRINE

- 1. The Jews challenged Jesus' public preaching, but Jesus proved that his teaching was from God;**
- 2. Jesus worked for the honor and glory of the one who sent him, and he condemns all preachers who seek their own glory and honor.**

Before our text we are told that the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was soon to be celebrated. Our text says: ***"Not until halfway through the Feast did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach."*** The reason for this was that the Jews in Judea had rejected Jesus entirely and wanted to kill him. So he remained in Galilee for the first part of the Feast. We are told: ***"Now at the Feast the Jews were watching for him and asking, 'Where is that man?' Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, 'He is a good man.' Others replied, 'No, he deceives the people.'"*** John 7:11-12

Then about halfway through the Feast Jesus quietly went to Jerusalem. He did not want to draw any attention to himself so that the Jews would not be irritated and try to kill him. The time set by God the Father for Jesus to die had not yet come. On two other occasions Jesus had come to Jerusalem and the temple in a way that made his presence felt among the people. He had come with authority and cleansed the temple. Another time he had healed a crippled man and sent him home carrying his couch on the Sabbath day. These acts had aroused the Jews. On this occasion, however, Jesus quietly assumed the role of a teacher, teaching his doctrine in the temple to a group of listeners.

As Jesus preached the precious truths of salvation for sinners, his number of listeners grew, and included among them were some of the Jews who hated him. ***"The Jews were amazed and asked, 'How did this man get such learning without having studied?'"*** The Jews knew who Jesus was and where he was from. On another occasion the people asked: ***"Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?"*** They then referred to him in a sneering way, asking: ***"Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and***

aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?' And they took offense at him," Matt. 13:54-57.

We hear charges against Jesus today also. People who are supposed to be learned scientists challenge Jesus' teaching in the Bible. The Bible is Jesus' Word and it teaches that God created the world and all that is in it in six ordinary days of 24 hours. Some learned scientists laugh at this truth and proclaim their theories of evolution. Even some that parade under the banner of Lutheranism challenge the teaching of the Bible in the matter of creation. Our nation spends billions of dollars also to find out the origin of life in the universe when NASA makes trips into space, whereas the answer as to the origin of life is clearly taught in God's Word.

Our text tells us: ***"Jesus answered, 'my teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me.'*** Jesus told the Jews that the source of his teaching was not in his own knowledge, but that it was from God the Father who sent him. He was not giving the people human ideas and philosophy, but the eternal truth of his heavenly Father. Jesus could teach the people with authority and conviction because he was giving them the everlasting truth of God.

Every true Lutheran Christian can have the same conviction that our teachings are expressing the truth of God's Word. Dr. Martin Luther expressed his conviction in these words: *"Thus I, too, say: The Gospel is mine, in contradistinction to the teaching of all other preachers, who do not have my doctrine. Therefore I declare: This is my doctrine, that is, Luther's doctrine. Still I also say that it is not my doctrine; it is not my product but God's gift. For, dear God, it did not spring from my imagination; it did not grow in my garden; it did not flow from my fountain; it was not born from me. No, it is the gift of God and not a human invention. Thus both are true; it is mine, and yet it is not mine; for it is God's, the heavenly Father's. But at the same time it is I who proclaim and espouse such doctrine,"* (Luther's Works, Vol. 23, p. 224).

Jesus suggested a way to the Jews by which they could prove this his doctrine was from God and therefore the eternal truth. ***"If any one chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own."*** The Jews were always boasting about the Law of God and wanted everyone to believe that they were very zealous in keeping the Law. They were self-righteous and boasted of their good works, but fell far short of doing the will of God. Any person will experience that the first result of trying to keep the Law of God will be that he realizes his utter inability to measure up to the demands of the holy God. Paul wrote to the Romans: ***"What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin,"*** Rom. 3:9. Then he quoted the words of Psalm 14:3: ***"There is no one who does good, not even one."***

The hymn writer Matthias Loy wrote of the Law of God: *"Its light of holiness imparts The knowledge of our sinful hearts, That we may see our lost estate And seek deliverance ere too late."* (The Lutheran Hymnal 295:2)

The only way any person can even begin to do the will of God according to God's commandments is to come to faith in Jesus through the proclamation of the Gospel. ***"Faith comes from hearing the message..."*** Rom. 10:17. Then the Holy Spirit through the powerful Gospel Word sanctifies us so that we want to do the will of God. If the Jews had accepted Jesus' teaching and by the grace of God believed in Jesus as their Savior, they would have known that Jesus' doctrine was the eternal truth of God.

In the final words of our text Jesus teaches concerning his divine origin and the divine origin of his doctrine that **he worked for the honor and glory of the one who sent him, and he condemns all preachers who seek their own honor and glory.**

2.

All genuine religious teaching must come from God. And every genuine religious teacher must teach as authorized and sent by God. Any religious teacher or preacher who presents any doctrine or religious system, which he has concocted, takes away the glory and honor that belongs to God. He seeks his own glory and honor. All such Jesus condemns. There are such in our day also. They proclaim their own ideas and strive after their own glory. The world is full of such preachers. They preach on every matter under the sun, except that which teaches the salvation of sinners through faith in Jesus Christ. Now there is no honor and glory in

faithfully preaching the old-fashioned truths of the Gospel of Christ Sunday after Sunday. For the true Gospel message proclaims the merits of Jesus Christ and gives all glory to God. Paul writes: ***“In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,”*** Col. 2:9. In his prayer before his suffering and death Jesus prayed: ***“Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent,”*** John 17:1-3. The preaching that gives all honor and glory to the Lord Jesus and the heavenly Father must include these truths: ***“God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them,”*** 2 Cor. 5:19. ***“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God,”*** 2 Cor. 5:21. If preachers do not proclaim this Gospel, but teach their own man-made ideas, they are interested only in promoting their own honor and glory. So Jesus says in our text: ***“He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself.”***

How different it was with Jesus! He says of himself: ***“But he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.”*** Jesus never sought publicity or planned great religious campaigns to attract great crowds. On one occasion he told the people not to say anything to any one about the miracle he had performed. When after the feeding of the five thousand the people wanted to make him their king, Jesus departed from them. In this way and in his entire ministry Jesus proved that God sent him because he did not seek his own glory and honor. Jesus said: ***“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many,”*** Matt. 20:28. Think of what he suffered for us and its blessed results: ***“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed,”*** Is. 53:4-5 So Paul writes: ***“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace....”*** Eph. 1:7.

Jesus’ only purpose in his teaching was to give all honor and glory to his Father. He said: ***“When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know who I am and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me,”*** John 8:28. Let us always interest ourselves in Jesus’ teachings and learn from them the only wisdom of abiding value.

“Thy Word is everlasting truth; How pure is every page! That holy Book shall guide our youth And well support our age.” Amen. (The Lutheran Hymnal 286:5)

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