

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**Second Sunday after Easter, April 14, 2013**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)  
Hymns: 234, 238:1, 359, 356, 356:7.  
Lessons: Job 19:25-27, 1 John 2:12-17, Luke 7:36-50.  
Sermon Text: John 8:21-30  
Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

When we read the history of Jesus' earthly ministry in the Bible, one thing that attracts our attention is Jesus' conversation with the Pharisees. What attracts our attention especially is the bitter hatred the self-righteous Pharisees had for Jesus. They were the ones who found fault with Jesus for doing what they consider unlawful on the Sabbath. They were the ones who said Jesus cast out demons by the power of Satan. They were the ones who asked Jesus to show some sign from heaven that he was the promised Christ, but would not believe on him when he performed miracles. They were the ones who tried to trick Jesus into saying something which would give them cause to condemn him. Just before our text we are told that the Pharisees challenged Jesus because of what he taught about himself.

Our text continues that conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees centering about the topic of Jesus' person. Someone might wonder why that should concern us today. Why should we preach about that? It concerns us and should be the concern of everybody because it has to do with eternal life in heaven or eternal death in hell. Whether or not people believe in Jesus determines whether they will perish in hell or have eternal life in heaven. The Bible says: "**Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.**" (Acts 4:12) Jesus said it very clearly to Nicodemus, a Pharisee who later became a believer in Jesus: "**Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.**" (John 3:36)

So then, both because of our own soul's salvation, and because of our concern for what happens to other people in eternity, we should be interested in what our text teaches. Let us learn:

**FAITH IN JESUS AS THE CHRIST IS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.**

- 1. We consider what happens to those who do not believe in him; and**
- 2. Why we should accept him as the Christ.**

After repeated clashes with the Pharisees, Jesus said: "**I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come.**" When Jesus said this, he was preaching the Law of God in all its severity to these Pharisees. Jesus spoke harsh words to them, but they needed to hear something that would wake them up spiritually. They needed to know that if they followed their present course of unbelief they would end up in hell. So, though Jesus' words sounded very harsh, they were spoken in sympathetic mercy because Jesus wanted these people to be saved.

Let us examine more closely what Jesus told them. First, he said: "**I am going away.**" Jesus had been with these people for some time. He had preached, performed miracles, and in many ways had shown that he was their promised Messiah, the Christ of God. They had rejected him in unbelief. So now he would leave them and return to his heavenly Father. And they would be left in their unbelief.

Then Jesus told them: "**You will look for me.**" Jesus means that these unbelieving Jews would seek a Messiah after Jesus was gone. They would look for help, grace, comfort and salvation. They would seek redemption from sin, Satan, death and hell. We see from history how Jesus' words have come true. Even today

yet, nearly 2,000 years since Christ spoke these words, the Jewish people are still looking for the promised Christ.

How vain their searching for a Christ would be, Jesus indicates by telling them **"You will die in your sin."** To die in sin means to die without forgiveness of sins, and so to suffer everlasting damnation. All because the forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus has been rejected in unbelief.

Finally, Jesus told these Pharisees: **"Where I go, you cannot come."** Consider this contrast: Jesus told his believing followers: **"I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."** (John 14:2-3) He told these unbelieving Jews just the opposite: **"Where I go, you cannot come."** In other words, he told them that they would be forever separated from God in hell. They would not go to heaven.

And how did the Pharisees react to this sincere preaching by Jesus? They reacted by ridiculing his words. They asked: **"Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, 'Where I go, you cannot come?'"** The loving and patient Savior ignored this ridicule. **"He continued, 'You are from below; I am from above. You, are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.'"** Jesus told the Pharisees that they were of this world, that is, sinful and only concerned with the things of this life and worldly things. But he was sinless, not of this world, but the Father's Son sent from heaven as the Christ of God.

Our text, then, very clearly teaches what happens to people who do not believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. They remain in their sins, and when death comes, they still have to pay for their sins in hell. Now, it is indeed true that God sent his Son for the whole world of sinners. **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him, shall not perish but have eternal life."** (John 3:16) But, if people do not believe in him, they are lost. **"Whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."** (John 3:18) Again, it is true as Paul writes, **"that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them."** (2 Corinthians 5:19) But this reconciliation by Jesus has to be accepted in faith. When it is rejected in unbelief, God does count the sins of the unbelievers against them to all eternity. The Bible says: **"The wages of sin is death."** (Romans 6:23) Unbelievers get what they earned by their sin - death in hell.

Faith in Jesus as the Christ is essential to salvation. God wants all people to be saved. He has done everything that is necessary for man's salvation. But if people reject the gracious gift of God in unbelief, they have no one to blame for their damnation but themselves. The Lord is also very patient with sinners. Peter writes that the Lord is **"not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."** (2 Peter 3:9) But when people stubbornly refuse God's Grace in Christ, they will be lost in eternity. Jesus says: **"Whoever does not believe will be condemned."** (Mark 16:16)

How extremely important it is, then, that we believe in Jesus and trust in him for salvation! Let us learn from our text why we should accept Jesus as the Christ.

2.

The Pharisees finally asked Jesus: **"Who are you?"** Jesus told them: **"Just what I have been claiming all along. ... I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world. They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father."** Jesus told the Jews that he was the one whom he had always claimed to be, that is, the Christ. He was sent by the Father in heaven, and in all his preaching he had spoken the truth that he had heard from his Father in heaven. Jesus told them that the Father who sent him was reliable, that is, he is the holy God who is truth itself, and whatever he says is true. The Jews did not understand that Jesus was speaking of the heavenly Father. So Jesus 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. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.' Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him."** Finally, some of the Jews believed on Jesus when he spoke to them about his crucifixion. This reminds us of what Jesus said to Nicodemus: **"No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven - the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."** (John 3:13-15) When we hear that some of the Jews believed on Jesus, this should comfort us in

our work of preaching the Gospel and supporting the preaching of the Gospel. That work is never in vain. Some people will believe by the grace of God, for as Paul says, ***“the Gospel is the power of God for salvation.”*** (Romans 1:16)

The question before us is: Do we accept Jesus by faith as the Christ of God? We certainly should, for our text gives us ample proof that he is the one he claimed to be, the one sent by the heavenly Father for our salvation. Everything that Jesus ever said of himself and what he would do has come true. He said he was the Christ sent by God. He foretold that he would be betrayed into the hands of the Jewish rulers and that they would condemn him, that he would be crucified, and the third day rise again. Whatever Jesus foretold about himself came true. He was betrayed. He was condemned by the Jewish rulers, their religious leaders. He was crucified. He did rise again on the third day. He said he would return to his Father in heaven, and so he did. On the 40th day after his resurrection he ascended into heaven. He said he would send the Holy Spirit to his followers to comfort and guide them, and so he did. On the 50th day after his resurrection the Holy Spirit was poured out on the followers of Christ. All this is overwhelming evidence that Jesus is the Christ.

And there is more evidence that is most convincing. The Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messiah were all fulfilled in Jesus. That is proof that the Bible is God's Word and that everything we read in the Bible is the truth. That Word of Truth calls Jesus Lord, Redeemer, Savior, Immanuel (“God with us”), God's only-begotten Son, and the eternal Word who became true man for our salvation. The Bible ascribes to Jesus many divine works. He created all things; he changed water into wine; he healed hundreds of sick people; he raised up people from the dead, and he raised up himself from the dead. Paul writes: ***“He was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.”*** (Romans 1:4)

Let us accept all this evidence in the Holy Scriptures, for in Christ Jesus we have the sure hope of eternal life and the only hope of eternal life. Lord, give us Thy grace to trust in him. Amen.

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