

## **“The Truth Shall Set You Free” (8:31-32)**

**Introduction:** In order to understand what I want to teach from this text this morning you need go with me to Jesus’ prayer on the night before His crucifixion (cf. John 17). It is there we hear Jesus speaking to His Father about those for whom He came. It is in this prayer that we learn some very important things – things which are introduced earlier in the gospel narrative and given some clarity here. 1. We know God (Father, Son and Spirit) through the historical Jesus – the Incarnate Son of God. 2. There is a fundamental reality that Jesus addresses – a reality which we don’t often think about but which impacts our lives here in the most profound way. Jesus is praying for us because our Christian lives will be lived out in the between time – the time between Jesus’ departure and His return – Living in the Light of the Enthronement of Jesus while we are laboring in the in between time – “shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life.” (cf. Dawson, p. 144-145). 3. All of the Christian life from the new birth, through our preservation/perseverance, growth/flourishing as Christians, and finally to the deepening and ultimate realization of our hope, finds its heart in living in the experience and transforming power of the life and love of God!! I know this seems mystical and elusive but we will spend the rest of our time in John and in my years here in Graeagle walking with Jesus and the writers of Scripture to the heart of God.

The life of the believer – in all of its Bible reading... - has a single healing and liberating destination – relational intimacy with the living God. It is that for which we have been created – for which our hearts ultimately yearn – the absence of which is the base of all of our dysfunction, hurt, etc. – the source of all healing and deliverance within our souls and health within our relationships – therein lies liberty.

I want to focus on three texts – make three key point from this text.

***To Know Jesus is to Know the Father*** – 8:13-30 – **Note:** Jesus’ declaration/claim in 8:12 (“I am the light of the world; the one who follows me shall never walk in darkness but he will have the light of life”) is met by the Jews with the objection that Jesus is testifying concerning Himself, without corroboration, therefore His testimony “is not true” or is not credible.

- Jesus’ response is to say that He alone is qualified to give truthful testimony about who He is because He alone “knows whence He has come and where He is going.” In addition, His testimony is corroborated, per their law, by another – the Father who sent Him (cf. 8:14, 17-18).

I want us to consider what is actually happening herein Jesus exchange with the Pharisees. I read this statement by Thomas F. Torrance some time ago and I keep coming back to it;

*“When we turn to the holy scriptures to find what they have to say about Jesus Christ we are aware that something happens: the one to whom the New Testament bears witness, Jesus Christ, himself acts upon us. In other words, the witness to Christ in the New Testament is more than witness: it is Christ’s own word to us about himself. It is his own*

*self-witness. Jesus Christ, so to speak, steps out of the pages of the New Testament and confronts us face to face and reveals himself personally to us. It is God who comes to us in this Christ, God who comes to be his own mediator, God who comes to authenticate himself to us. Now **what** God reveals to us in Jesus Christ and the **manner** of his revealing, the content and the mode of revelation, are inseparable.”<sup>1</sup>*

We are not only witnesses to Jesus’ self-revelation in this exchange with the Pharisees but Jesus effectively “*steps out of the pages of the New Testament and confronts us face to face and reveals himself personally to us. It is God who comes to us in this Christ, God who comes to be his own mediator, God who comes to authenticate himself to us.*” We understand that this is achieved by the Holy Spirit.

- The knowledge of God **starts with knowing the historical Jesus, the Jesus of history as He reveals Himself to us in scripture** – cf. 8:19-29 -

8:19, 23-29 – Jesus does two things – **First**, He connects knowing the Father with knowing Himself.

**Second**, He teaches that He is God – and/or God is Trinity - and to know God begins with knowing Jesus, the Incarnate Son **or believing that He is “I Am.”** (cf. esp. 8:19, 23-24, 28).

James Sawyer noted that “**any discussion of the Trinity that is not grounded in the incarnation floats off into abstract speculation.**”<sup>2</sup> He goes on to speak to us about the “study of God” which we as Christians undertake – that abstract speculation – in which we hold God at a distance and “study” or objectively analyze Him based in His observable “components” or parts. He warns against centering our study of God in the study of His attributes – He likens this to knowing a person by performing an autopsy. God, as Father, Son and Spirit, is personal and utterly relational.<sup>3</sup> **He is known as such through Jesus. God steps off of His throne and out of heaven and into the pages of history as man AND He presents Himself to be known by us** (cf. John 1:14-18; Hebrews 1:1-3; Ephesians 3:14-19; Colossians 2:8-10; 3:1-4). That is what is taking place in first century Israel – here in John – and that is what is taking place here in 21<sup>st</sup> century Graeagle.

8:21-22, 24, 26-29 – He is declaring that our very life and salvation depends on what we do with this Jesus!!

- This is Life lived and experienced in the “between time” (cf. 8:21-22, 24, 26-29). Essentially we are saying – Jesus is saying – that the Jesus of history, who is the Divine Son incarnate, is the very same Jesus now seated on the throne at the Father’s right hand. We await the return of that

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<sup>1</sup> Torrance, “Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ,” page 33

<sup>2</sup> M. James Sawyer, “Resurrecting the Trinity,” 86-87

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. page 82 “When we talk about the Trinity we are in the realm of the personal and relational.”

Jesus, to finish the work for which the Father sent Him, as our hope (cf. John 14:1-7; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 3:1-4).

**Note:** Jesus' promise to those who have believed is the promise of *assurance and liberty* in the "between time" or "the light of light." It is the promise of assurance that we are indeed His disciples. It is the promise of liberty which is the freedom from sin (singular) to include from sins condemning and enslaving power – even the power of sins committed against us to enslave us to our brokenness and shame.

***True Liberty is Found in "Abiding" in Jesus' Word, Which is to Abide in His Love*** – 8:31-32; John 15:1-11 – This is life in the "between time" for the believer – the "light of/from life" – is a life of the liberty found in "abiding" in His word.

- Abiding is relational because it is the fundamental nature of God – abiding in His word is bi-directional

- It is living in the context of and experience of His love – cf. John 15:1-11

- Abiding *in His love* is transforming

**Note:** The Jews object to His promise of "liberty" or freedom, based in their lineage. This provides the occasion for Jesus to take them directly from His promise of "freedom/liberty" to a discussion of paternity (cf. 8:28-29). This is effectively circling back to the truth of God as Trinity – which is to emphasize that He exists in (subsistence) relationship (Father, son and Spirit), that He is utterly relational, and that those relationships are, at their core, "love" relationships ("God is love!"). Jesus alludes to the fact that, in Him, we are brought into the life and love of the Father, Son and Spirit – of the Triune God!!

***Having God as Our Father is Seen in Our Response of Love to Jesus – Living in the Life and Love of God – Is the Place of Profound Healing/Liberty*** 8:32-43; 14:1-7, 21-23

- Jesus takes this into the context of "family" relations (cf. 8:34-37 – "my word has no room/place/hold *in you*," – 8:38-42 – Father relations – "*If God were your Father you would love me*, for I have come from God").

- Jesus came so that we might be brought into the life and love of the Father, Son and Spirit, and that we might know His Father as our Father – 14:1-7; 17:1-3

- This is the very context of life lived here in relationship with God as Father through Jesus. This is what it means to "abide in" His word or His love – the means of the life of fullness and liberty as well as the goal, the driving hope, of our lives (cf. 14:21-23; 17:1-3, 20-26).

- This relationship/love compels obedience from the place of deep or full joy - liberty (cf. 14:21-23; John 15:9-11; Ephesians 3:14-19) – "The most beautiful moment of any creature's life: to know that one is loved, personally by God, to feel oneself lifted to the bosom of the Trinity and

to find oneself in the flood of love that flows between the Father and Son, enfolded in their love, sharing their passionate love for the world.” Stephen Seamonds quoting Raneiro Cantalamessa<sup>4</sup>

God pictures our needs as thirsts left unquenched – which we seek to meet by building cisterns with cracks in them to catch water – cisterns which ultimately fail. We need only respond to God’s invitation, as the “spring of living water” and drink deeply to our soul’s satisfaction (cf. Jeremiah 2:13; 14:3; Isaiah 55:1-3a).

This is the place of profound “being” from which “doing” or life is lived rightly (cf. Luke 10:38-42). This bondage seen in duty or the residue of sin’s affect is rightly broken in “abiding” in the life and love the Father has for His Son as expressed by the Spirit (cf. John 15:9-11; 17:20-26).

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<sup>4</sup> Stephen Seamonds, “Ministry in the Image of God,” 53