

## John 8.30-59

- Background/context
  - A gospel of "signs" (2.1-12, 4.46-54, 5.2-11, 6.1-15, 9.1-12, 11.1-44)
  - A gospel of "discourses" (3.1-21, 4.7-26, 5.17-47, 6.25-66, 7.14-39, 8.12-59, 10.1-39)
  - The "I am" statements (6.35/6.41, 8.12/9.5, 8.59, 10.7/10.11/10.14, 10.38, 11.25, 14.6, 15.1)
  - All of these serve the over-riding purpose of the entire book (20.31)
- Review: context of a continuing conversation
  - 7.1-10: Jesus comes to Jerusalem to attend the Festival of Booths
  - 7.14-36: questions/controversies about the identity and authority of Jesus
  - 7.37-39: "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water"
  - 7.40-52: questions about the identity and authority of Jesus
  - 8.2-11: the woman caught in adultery [likely an interpolation]
  - 8.12-20: questions about the validity of the testimony of Jesus to his own identity
  - 8.21-29: Jesus foretells his departure to the Father

- PART ONE: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE FREE?

<sup>30</sup>As he was saying these things, many believed in him. <sup>31</sup>Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; <sup>32</sup>and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." <sup>33</sup>They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, 'You will be made free'?" <sup>34</sup>Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. <sup>35</sup>The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. <sup>36</sup>So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."

- 8.30-31: testing the sincerity of "belief" (cf. Mt 13.1-24, the parable of the sower)
- 8.31-34: true freedom, false freedom
- 8.35: membership in the household of God (cf. Lk 15.11-32, the parable of the prodigal son)

- PART TWO: WHO ARE THE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM?

<sup>37</sup>"I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you look for an opportunity to kill me, because there is no place in you for my word. <sup>38</sup>I declare what I have seen in the Father's presence; as for you, you should do what you have heard from the Father." <sup>39</sup>They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did, <sup>40</sup>but now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. <sup>41</sup>You are indeed doing what your father does."

- 8.37: despite their profession of belief, Jesus discerns a deeper motive
- 8.38: anticipates his later prayer to the Father (17.5) and echoes the gospel writer (1.14-18)
- 8.39: compare Paul on the "child of flesh" and the "child of promise" (Gal 3-4)

- PART THREE: WHO HAS BEEN BORN OF GOD?

They said to him, "We are not illegitimate children; we have one father, God himself." <sup>42</sup>Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me. <sup>43</sup>Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot accept my word. <sup>44</sup>You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. <sup>45</sup>But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. <sup>46</sup>Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? <sup>47</sup>Whoever is from God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not from God." <sup>48</sup>The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" <sup>49</sup>Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. <sup>50</sup>Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is one who seeks it and he is the judge."

- 8.42: Jesus himself is the condition for acceptance of his teaching (cf. 14.6)
- 8.43-47: the word of mercy received as a word of judgment (cf. 3.5-21)
- 8.44: our words/actions reveal our nature (cf. Mt 12.34-40)

- PART FOUR: "WHO DO YOU CLAIM TO BE?"

<sup>51</sup>"Very truly, I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death." <sup>52</sup>The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, and so did the prophets; yet you say, 'Whoever keeps my word will never taste death.' <sup>53</sup>Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets also died. Who do you claim to be?" <sup>54</sup>Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, he of whom you say, 'He is our God,' <sup>55</sup>though you do not know him. But I know him; if I would say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him and I keep his word. <sup>56</sup>Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad." <sup>57</sup>Then the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" <sup>58</sup>Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am." <sup>59</sup>So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

- 8.56: Abraham saw the day of Jesus when he believed God's promise (Gen 17.17)
- 8.57: those talking with Jesus fail to recognize he commends a different way of seeing/thinking
- 8.58: Jesus is not only contemporary to Abraham, he is superior to him (cf. Lk 20.37-38)

- Questions for reflection

- The essential question: who is Jesus (not just a question of identity, but of obedience)?
- How do we understand and experience both "slavery" and "freedom"?
- What is our place (inheritance, vocation) in the household of God?
- What do our words and our actions reveal about our nature?