

February 1, 2015  
Sunday Morning Service  
Series: John  
Community Baptist Church  
643 S. Suber Road  
Greer, SC 29650  
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*To Ponder . . .*

Questions to ponder as you prepare to hear from John 8:39-47.

1. Who is your spiritual father, and how do you demonstrate that truth?
2. Do you understand the words of Jesus that are recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John?
3. If you cannot understand what Jesus taught, what do you suppose the problem is?
4. How have you observed the reality that Satan is the father of lies?

### **DO YOU KNOW WHO YOUR FATHER IS** **John 8:39-47**

It is almost impossible to read this story about Jesus' argument with the disbelieving Jews and not get caught up, to some extent, with the phrase made popular in the world of sports almost two decades ago. The phrase "Who's your daddy?" was meant to be derogatory. Most pundits believe the phrase was probably taken from a pop song in the sixties titled "Time of the Season" sung by *The Zombies*. A catchy phrase in that song asked, "What's your name, who's your daddy?"

It showed up in a handful of movies but was made wildly popular by the Duke University basketball team in the late 1990's. Apparently, the taunt was to imply that your daddy wasn't as

important or wise or strong as my daddy. A few years later, the phrase was all the rage in the American League Championship series in 2004 when Pedro Martinez pitched for the Boston Red Sox against the Yankees. He had grown quite agitated with the Yankee club and some months earlier had made the mistake of admitting that the Yankees were good enough to beat him saying, "I tip my hat and call the Yankees my daddy." During the playoffs when he pitched against the Yankees, he heard plenty of "Who's your daddy?"

The ancient Jews who argued with Jesus weren't aware of that phrase. But if the derogatory slam had been popular then, they certainly would have chided, "Who's your daddy?" That is where the whole conflict between them and Jesus during the Feast of Tabernacles had led. They didn't mind if Jesus was a brilliant teacher, or if He did miracles of healing and providing free food. But when He kept insisting that He came from heaven where He lived for eternity in the presence of God His heavenly Father, they really got irritated.

Finally, in the argument recorded in our text, the Jews slammed Jesus by implying that He had no daddy because He was born illegitimately. That was a popular explanation when people refused to accept that Jesus was born of a virgin—which truth most refused. It is the same argument that has been presented for the past 175 years by liberal Bible teachers who refuse to accept the miracles of the Bible they claim to teach. They especially refuse to accept the miracle of God the Son becoming one of us when the Holy Spirit put Christ the seed in the virgin Mary's womb. Their explanation is that Jesus was born as a result of Mary having relations with a German soldier who was stationed somewhere in the region.

Again we are forced to accept the reality that people do not change. We are, as Solomon concluded in Ecclesiastes, the same generation after generation. There is nothing new under the sun. Therefore, because religious people in Jesus' day could not understand the truth He taught about Himself, they rejected Him. And today when people cannot understand the truth about Jesus Christ, they too reject Him by rejecting His word. Why don't they get it? Why is it so difficult to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was God in the flesh who came to earth for about 35 short years in order to live perfectly under God's law and then be killed to offer His own perfect

blood as the covering for the offenses of sinners who will simply trust Him?

You and I find that whole picture not only believable, but wondrously believable. We have staked our future eternity on it. But so many of our peers don't believe it. Why? Jesus gives us the answer as He responded to people who chided Him with "Who's your daddy?".

### **You Don't Act like Abraham's Kids (vv.39-43).**

People in Jesus' day flippantly claimed the name of Abraham. Why would they? Abraham set a good example. Yes, but the people didn't follow (vv.39-40). Be that as it may, they were still proud to be Abraham's children. When Jesus told the people that they were simply doing what their father did, *They answered him, "Abraham is our father"* (v.39a). This was their answer to Jesus' accusation that they had misplaced their faith on their physical lineage. Okay, it was certainly truth that they were children of Abraham physically. But if they were children of Abraham spiritually (i.e. believers in God), they would not be trying to kill Him (i.e. God) (v.37).

Therefore, when Jesus accused them of being mistaken about their heritage, the people answered that Abraham was indeed their father. This seems to be a focus on the spiritual relationship which Jesus had just dismissed. It is as though they responded, "Oh but Abraham is our spiritual father." Such a claim ought to be easy enough to prove, especially on the basis of other great principles Jesus had taught and established. Jesus taught, *"The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks"* (Luke 6:45). He taught His followers to, *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. . . . Thus you will recognize them by their fruits"* (Matthew 7:15-17, 20).

The problem that comes to the surface in this discussion is one that never seems to go away. Is it not possible that we too might

claim to be Christians? But, if we do, how much do our lives conform to the character of Christ?

The people gathered in the crowd around Jesus proved by their actions that Abraham wasn't their father. This was obvious as Jesus reminded them that children act like their dads. *Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did"* (v.39b). Our son, Mark, told us about trying to get a dish out of the microwave the other day. The dish was hotter than he expected and he dropped it on the stove which made a mess. Being human the way he is, when he was taken by surprise and slopped up the stove, he responded without stopping to think with a word that wasn't wicked, but wasn't edifying either. As Murphy's law would have it, little two-year-old Astrid was standing their watching the whole episode and immediately ran all over the house repeating the unedifying word over and over.

What was "dad" Abraham like? One certain thing was that Abraham believed God. One example of the man's faith was when he told Isaac that God would provide for Himself the Lamb for the sacrifice (Gen. 22:8). By these words we observe that Abraham thoroughly believed that God would provide the promised rest for the nation He would yet build out of Abraham's loins. Because Abraham looked forward to God providing salvation from sin through His own provided sacrifice, God put righteousness on Abraham's account.

Also, because Abraham believed God, he acted like it. He went as far as to put his son Isaac on the altar, believing God all the way. On another occasion, Abraham refused to let wealthy men make him wealthy so that God would receive all the glory for whatever happened in his life (Genesis 14:21-23). To the king of Sodom who wanted to give Abraham all the "stuff" he had rescued from the enemy, Abe said, *"I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich'"* (Genesis 14:22-23).

Likewise, when God called him, Abraham left his home, family, and culture to search for the city whose designer and builder is God (Hebrews 11:9-11). Abraham believed the words God gave to him and he could prove it by the way he acted, by the desires of his heart.

Because Abraham fully trusted God's words, he, unlike his posterity, never thought of killing truth-tellers. Jesus uncovered the hypocrites at the temple that day when He said, "*But now you seek to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did*" (v.40). These people who claimed to be Abraham's spiritual children, that is, believers in God just like him, rejected the truth God gave through Jesus.

That's not how Abraham responded to truth—even if the truth was difficult to swallow. When God determined that He needed to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities because of their thorough, intense sin, He sent two messengers to Abraham to warn about what was going to happen to the city where his nephew lived. It is likely that one of the messengers (angels) was a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. When these two messengers informed Abraham that God was going to destroy the cities, Abraham did not respond by threatening to kill them? He didn't even disbelieve them. He responded with complete faith that they had spoken God's truth.

The people who claimed they were just like Abraham proved they weren't even close. Jesus uncovered the fact that they wanted to kill Him. That was something father Abraham never would have done. A day or so earlier, the people argued with Jesus that no one was trying to kill Him. Jesus said, "*Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?*" *The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?"* (John 7:19-20). But in fact the religious rulers had already met in counsel to determine how and when to kill Jesus (John 5:18; 7:1). Even more to the point, these very people will in a few minutes pick up stones to throw at Him (8:59). About two months from this point, at the Feast of Dedication, the crowd will again take up stones to stone Jesus (John 10:31). Father Abraham didn't murder innocent people, and he especially would not murder the One he trusted for salvation.

Obviously then, the people who were arguing with Jesus were doing the work of a different father. Jesus said so. *You are doing the works your father did* (v.41a). They were definitely doing the work of one who had gone before them. We all do because, as Solomon concluded, there is nothing new under the sun. *What has been is what*

*will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun* (Ecclesiastes 1:9). It is true that technology does change. But people use new technology with the same motives, and to the same ends, as their forefathers fifty generations ago used their new technology. Which is to say that we will respond in any age, in any circumstance, according to who our father is. Jesus' point is simple: either our spiritual father is God (as Abraham's was) or he is "someone" else. We will discover who in a few minutes.

God spoke truth the people couldn't hear (vv.41-43). The people were also proud to have God as their father. *They said to Him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father – even God"* (v.41b). The hypocrites quickly straightened out Jesus' misunderstanding about them. Yes, it was true that they boasted in Abraham as their spiritual father. No, they did not appreciate Jesus' accusation that they were doing the work of a different father. They were smart enough to figure out what Jesus implied. Therefore, the perceptive people also claimed God as their ONLY spiritual father. At this point, the argument is starting to sound a bit like children arguing. "My dad's stronger than your dad." "Oh yeah! My dad is Superman!"

Then, in an effort to enhance their argument, the people resorted to an ad-hominem fallacy. They snidely smirked at Jesus, "*We were not born of sexual immorality!*" What did that mean? It was a slam against Jesus' character and reputation. It's easy to understand why people thought Jesus of Nazareth was illegitimate. His mother conceived Him and bore Him even though she was a virgin. Right! No one using human logic is going to believe that. Even Joseph, who loved her dearly, contemplated how to put her away for her wicked deed—until an angel convinced him to believe the miracle.

Believing that Jesus was born to a virgin was about as easy as believing He came from heaven from the presence of God to pay the price to redeem sinners from the penalty of sin. That is as it should be. All of the miracles of the incarnation, perfect life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension rise or fall together. We must accept them all by faith or we cannot accept any of them. Clear thinking people, people whose minds God has opened, embrace these truths at all costs. Confused people don't.

The people's hatred toward Jesus proved they were confused. *Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but He sent Me" (v.42).* It was obvious that God was not their spiritual Father regardless of their claims. They had learned from childhood that because they were Israelites, children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God was automatically on their side. They believed they would be the first to inherit God's Kingdom.

But there were some holes in the people's reasoning that would leave them outside the kingdom in eternal punishment. First, if God was truly their spiritual Father, they would love Jesus. Since God the Father revealed at Jesus' baptism that He loves God the Son dearly, why would people not love Him also? Since God the Son came from the presence of God the Father, why would people who love God not love the Son?

Second, if God was truly their spiritual Father, they would believe that Jesus came from God. Jesus told them that they ought to love Him, *for I came from God and I am here.* If you don't believe Jesus was God the Son having come from God the Father, you would not have a reason to love Him. If you don't believe that Jesus came from God, you have to believe He is an imposter. If He is an imposter, He is not a good, kind, benevolent teacher.

Third, if God was truly their spiritual Father, they would know that Jesus was on earth doing God's work and will. Jesus assured them, *"I came not of my own accord, but He sent Me."* They should have realized that truth. People who love God and know Him as their spiritual Father would recognize God's work. If people saw Jesus' work and concluded that it was not God's work, they would not love Him. In fact, they would accuse Him of having a demon and doing the work of Satan (10:20).

This all sounds so contemporary. Many people confess that Jesus was a good man who went about doing good and doing hard to explain works. But at the same time, they cannot accept the fact that He is God in the flesh. Many other people claim that Jesus was an imposter because He claimed to have come from God to do God's work. That is ultimately the reason the authorities killed Him. And the same kind of disbelief would kill Him again in 2015! It is impossible to love Jesus and to reject what He said about Himself.

The people were terribly confused. There was a good reason why the people were confused. Jesus exposed the reason when He asked, *"Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word" (v.43).* It was obvious that the people did not understand what Jesus was saying. Even the people would admit that Jesus' claims were very confusing. In light of all they knew about God, they could not comprehend God becoming one of us in order to die for our sins.

People still cannot embrace this teaching if they are relying on human wisdom to explain it. In the first place, the most common response is to deny that we have any sin that needs to be forgiven. Second, humbly bowing to Jesus who died in our place is out of the question for natural human pride.

But the real reason people do not believe what Jesus said about Himself is because they cannot bear to hear His word. Sinners cannot learn the truth of Christ's teaching by experience. They cannot learn it because they are not able to hear it. Oh sure, they hear words or they read words written in red in the Bible. But they cannot grasp the truth because no ability to comprehend has been given to them.

The verb used here (*dunamai*) means that someone or something is giving the person the power or ability to comprehend (a present tense, passive voice). Jesus said that it was His ministry to shed light on the darkness of human ignorance (1:4-5). This is still God's ministry of mercy and grace to us who are blinded by sin and Satan. Paul described the work of enlightening, *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6).*

If you are able to read the Bible and understand what God has written, it is because God is gracious and kind to help you. Some of the brightest and most religious people in the world cannot begin to comprehend that Jesus is God who came to pay for our sins. This is where Jesus drew the line in the sand . . . and still does. He made it clear that the people were mistaken to think that God was their spiritual father. If not God, then who?

**Of the Devil or of God (vv.44-47).**

Jesus taught that Satan's character is obvious. He taught that Satan is a liar and murderer. Describing the real spiritual father of the people Jesus said, "*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 out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies*" (v.44b). Go back to the beginning of history and discover that Cain committed the first murder because he was influenced by Satan and thoroughly sinful. It is Satan's nature and character to destroy all that is good.

He is deathly destructive because he hates truth. Rest assured that if Satan ever presents truth, it is only to create the opportunity to twist it and do some kind of harm. There is no abiding of pure truth in Satan—at all. If you can identify falsehood, you can rest assured that Satan is involved in that somewhere, somehow. Because lying is Satan's character, he cannot NOT lie. Someone spoke to me one time about a public figure. He asked, "Do you know how you tell if he is lying?" I said, "No." The man said, "His lips are moving." That is the character of Satan. Not only must he lie all the time, but Satan is the father of lies. That also means that all lies originate with him. When your child lies, he or she does so because of the influence of sin which Satan authors.

Suddenly that very difficult restriction of Scripture makes sense. Have you ever noticed the simplicity of requirements for people who don't go to heaven but end up in the lake of fire as Jesus stated it near the end of the Bible? *But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death (Revelation 21:8).* Those are all characteristics of Satan—especially lying.

Now the painful truth is that we are born into that family. Jesus applied this truth to the contrary Jews in particular. "*You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires*" (v.44a). No, God of heaven was not the spiritual father of those unbelieving Jews. Ultimately they lied about Jesus, they tortured Jesus, and they killed Jesus—exactly as Jesus promised they would. Why? Because Jesus is of God the Father and had to tell the truth, while the people were of their father Satan and had to lie and kill just like he does.

The same truth applies to all of us naturally. God is our spiritual Father only if we have come to Him through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus said to him, "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*" (John 14:6). If we have not come to God through faith in Jesus Christ to forgive our sins, our spiritual father is still Satan. You might do your dead-level best to act better than your spiritual father because he is so embarrassing to you. But in the end, you still belong to Satan because you were born into his family.

By now it should be crystal clear to us that God's character is opposed to Satan's (vv.45-47). Jesus revealed the truth about God. "*But because I tell the truth*" (v.45a). He spoke what He learned in heaven (8:26). Therefore, He had to speak only truth. Only people of God hear and understand the truth. The contrary Jews were not able to grasp truth even though there was no reason not to believe Jesus. Nevertheless, they steadfastly would not believe Jesus. Jesus pointed out, "*You do not believe Me*" (v.45b). This was the case even though they would acknowledge that they had no human reason not to believe Jesus. Jesus asked, "*Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?*" (v.46).

Actually, while there was no human reason not to believe Jesus, there was plenty of spiritual reason why they would not believe. "*Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God*" (v.47). If you hear God speaking truth through His word, thank Him and praise Him for being gracious to you. If you are only confused by God's word and argumentative, pray that God will open your eyes to the wonder of salvation.