



Text: John 8:39-59<sup>1</sup>

Series: *Life in His Name* – The Message of John’s Gospel

Title: Part 21 -- “You are you ... really?”

Date: March 20, 2011

Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

As we read from John’s Gospel this morning I want you to notice the frequency of the word, “father.” The word is used in reference to three individuals. First, it’s used in reference to God as “Father,” secondly, it’s used in reference to Abraham as the “father” of the Jewish people and thirdly, it’s used in reference to God’s enemy, the devil.

The text we’re about to read asks a profound question of us all this morning and it’s this...

### **“Who’s your father?”**

Of whose family are you a member? Who is your father? “Who are you, really?”

I’m reading this morning from John’s Gospel, chapter eight, verse thirty-nine to fifty-nine. This is God’s Word. Although what Jesus says is hard to hear, let’s hear it as the word from God’s throne and from his heart. It’s a hard word, but it’s a good word because it is intended to draw us to the eternal life that is found only in Jesus Christ.

**<sup>39</sup> They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works Abraham did,<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup> You are doing the works your father did.” They said to him, “We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God.”<sup>42</sup> 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.**

**<sup>43</sup> Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.<sup>44</sup> You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with 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.<sup>45</sup> But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.<sup>46</sup> Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?<sup>47</sup> Whoever is of**

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**God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of 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. <sup>51</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.” <sup>52</sup> The Jews said to him, “Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, ‘If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.’ <sup>53</sup> Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?”**

**<sup>54</sup> Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’ <sup>55</sup> But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to 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 father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” <sup>57</sup> So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” <sup>58</sup> Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to 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.**

“Who is your father?” It’s important to notice that there are really only two families in view in this text. Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, was also a member of the family of our Heavenly Father by reason of his faith in God. So when you sort out Jesus’ teaching, he only has two families in view so the question he’s asking his hearers is simply...

**“Are you a member of God’s family or the devil’s family?”**

This kind of “either/or” language is very hard for us to hear but it’s very common in Jesus’ teaching. For instance, Jesus said...

**“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.” Matthew 6:24**

And again he said...

**“Whoever is not with me is against me....” Matthew 12:30**

But perhaps the best example of Jesus’ “either/or” language is found in Matthew chapter twenty-five. Jesus was speaking of the Day of Judgment when the people of every age will be gathered before his throne to be judged as to whether or not they lived according to God’s grace and compassion. Jesus said...



**“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’” Matthew 25:31-34**

And then Jesus will turn to those on his left, “the goats,”...

**“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels ... And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.’” Matthew 25:41, 46**

The “sheep” are blessed by the Father and receive eternal life; the “goats” are cursed and receive eternal punishment together with the devil.

Do you see Jesus’ “either/or” vision of reality?

**It’s either the Father or the devil;  
We’re either sheep or we’re goats;  
We receive either eternal life or eternal punishment;  
Our destination is either the kingdom or eternal fire.**

So the question, “Who is your father?” is of absolute, eternal importance. It’s “the question” we must answer but it’s a question that can be hard to answer. The people with whom Jesus was dealing were convinced that they were members of God’s family but Jesus didn’t agree. They said...

**“We have one Father – even God” John 8:41**

But Jesus said to them...

**“You are of your father the devil....” John 8:44**

These people were completely wrong about their real identity. They were not members of God’s family but they thought they were. Jesus didn’t only question their claim, he gave them a diagnostic grid to apply to their lives to help them discern their true identity. Jesus said to them...

**“If God were your Father, you would love me...” John 8:42**

There are six “if” statements like this scattered throughout the passage we just read. Jesus was inviting these people to reflect on their lives and their



relationship with him and ask themselves the question, “who am I ... really?” Jesus was inviting them to think along these lines: “If I am a child of God the Father then certain things will be true about my relationship with the Son of God. If God is really my Father, then there will be something in my relationship with His Son that demonstrates that I am a member of God’s family.”

We encountered this principle earlier in John’s Gospel. Jesus said...

**“Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.” John 5:23**

And we’ll encounter it again. Jesus said...

**“Whoever hates me hates my Father also.” John 15:23**

John picks up this theme in Jesus’ teaching and in his First Letter he wrote...

**“No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.” 1 John 2:23**

It’s completely possible that some of us this morning are just as mistaken about our real spiritual identity as these people in Jesus’ day were. It’s possible that we’re not asking ourselves the right questions. It’s quite possible that we are not applying the right grid to our lives. Some might be thinking that because they are members of the church that they’re members of God’s family. Well, not necessarily so. Some might be thinking that because they grew up attending Sunday school and learning Bible stories that they’re members of God’s family. Not necessarily. Some among us might think that because they engage in good works on behalf of the church that they’re members of God’s family. Maybe not.

You see, the question of whether or not we are members of God the Father’s family is determined by the nature of our relationship with the Son of God, Jesus Christ. It comes down to the simple point of what do we do with Jesus. Jesus said...

**“If God were your Father, you would love me...” John 8:42**

So what we do with Jesus determines whether or not we are members of God’s family. This morning I want to highlight six aspects of a relationship with Jesus that will be present in the lives of those who are members of God’s family. All six of these facets will be present in the life of a child of God in some degree or another. What I’m giving you today are **six characteristics of a member of God’s family** and I hope this morning to help to you settle the question for yourself once and for all: “Who is my father?”

**First** of all,



## **If God is my Father I will obey Jesus the Son**

John records this dialogue between Jesus and the crowd...

**“They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, 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.” John 8:39-40**

Without question, Abraham had been a member of God’s family. His membership in God’s family was established beyond doubt by the declaration made about him by the writer of Genesis, when he wrote that Abraham...

**“believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.” Genesis 15:6**

Abraham had been declared righteous by God because of his faith in God’s Word to him. When God first appeared to Abraham and said to him...

**“Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.” Genesis 12:1**

Abraham went because God said, “Go...” All he had was God’s Word, and he committed his entire life to its truth.

When God appeared again to Abraham and said to him...

**“Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” Genesis 22:2**

Abraham did exactly as God directed him, even to the point of raising a knife to kill his only son, before God intervened and provided a ram for the sacrifice. All Abraham had was God’s command, but he did it.

When God said, “go,” Abraham went. When God made a promise, Abraham believed it. When God asked of him a hard obedience, Abraham obeyed. That’s what Abraham “did.” (John 8:40) God summarized Abraham’s life with these words that were recorded by the author of Genesis. God said...

**“Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.” Genesis 26:5**

Jesus had spoken the truth of God to these people and they had rejected it, they had not kept it. They had rebelled against it, they didn’t obey it. And while



Abraham had been willing to kill his own son in obedience to God, these people were ready to kill God's Son rather than obey his word.

If I'm a child of the Father I will obey the word of His Son, regardless of how hard it might be. **Do you obey Jesus?**

**Second,**

### **If God is my Father I will love Jesus the Son**

Jesus said to the crowd...

**"You are doing the works your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God." 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." John 8:41-42**

There is a great connection between love and obedience in the teaching of Jesus. Jesus said...

**"If you love me, you will keep my commandments." John 14:15**

Keeping Jesus' commandments opens the door to a deeper experience of the love of God the Father. Jesus said...

**"Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." John 14:21**

If we love Jesus, we will keep his word. If we keep his word, God will come to us and we will experience Him more intimately. Without the presence of love in our relationship with Jesus, obeying him would be a graceless, joyless grind but with the addition of love, our obedience to him becomes joy.

Wayne Cordeiro is a pastor on the island of Oahu and he tells a story that illustrates the connection between love and obedience. He wrote...

*When I was dating my wife, Anna, one thing I admired about her was her love for sports. I love sports too, but there are two sports I don't like. Forgive me if you like these, but I don't.*

*The first is bowling. I can't understand it. You pick up this cannonball and throw it on this beautiful maple floor that's tilted. And it goes down and disappears, thank goodness. All of a sudden "swbump!" it comes back again. You throw that thing down again, and it goes down and disappears. All of a sudden "swbump!" it comes back. All night you're trying to get rid of it. Finally when you're done and*



*you try to leave, they make you pay for throwing that ball down on the ground. That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard.*

*The other is roller-skating: four wheels, none of them turn, and they expect you to go around in circles.*

*This is a true story. On our first date, I knocked on Anna's door. I was so excited. I said, "Where would you like to go tonight?" She said, "Do you like bowling?" And she picked up her own bowling ball. She had her own bag. Now, I was in love, so when she asked if I liked bowling, my answer was, "I love bowling." And we went bowling all night. We had a great time.*

*The next week I knocked on her door. I said, "Where would you like to go this week?" She picked up her skates. She said, "Do you like skating?" I said, "I've been waiting for months for someone to ask me go skating. I love skating." And we skated all night.*

*I look back on it now and think, "What made it easy for me to change? Did I have to work up this thing to change my desire for bowling and skating? No. It was because of my relationship with that girl. Because of the love that I had in relationship with her, change was easy.*

*The power to change is predicated upon your relationship with God. How often I think, God, it's hard to do what you're asking me to do, hard to change. Do I just grit my teeth? "No," the Lord says, "why don't you just come closer to the cross? Why don't you let me restore and renew my relationship with you? Would you come close?"<sup>2</sup>*

**Do you love Jesus?**

**Third,**

**If God is my Father I will listen to Jesus the Son**

Jesus said to the crowd...

**"Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. ... If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God." John 8:43-47**

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<sup>2</sup> Wayne Cordeiro, "A Personal Relationship," Preaching Today audio no. 225 © 2011 PreachingToday.com



I was talking recently with a young believer who is going through a very difficult time of seeking God's will for her life. She is facing important issues and she is finding her strength in God's Word. She has resolved that she wants to do God's will in the situation she is facing and it's God's Word that brings her comfort, encouragement, direction and hope. Her testimony and her experience is the universal experience of the children of the Father. God's children long to hear His Word. Those who are not God's children, Jesus says, "cannot bear to hear my word." (v.43) but those who are God's children cannot get enough of it!

Listening to Jesus means eating up God's Word as if it were the bread I need to keep my spirit alive. Jesus said of God's Word...

**"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:4**

To "hear" the word of God means to "listen and respond" to what God is saying. Listening to Jesus is more than just packing my head with truth. Listening to Jesus also involves doing what he says. I've been personally challenged in recent weeks by the word of God that spoke to me from The Epistle of James...

**"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."  
James 1:22**

"Listening" to Jesus means allowing my heart to be encouraged by his truth. It means charting the direction of my life to keep in step with God's purposes. It means denying to myself that which he forbids and accepting for myself that which he provides. It means holding to his promises and standing for this truth against all other competing voices.

**Do you listen to Jesus?**

**Fourth,**

**If God is my Father I will honour Jesus the Son**

John tells us...

**"The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me." John 8:48-49**

How did Jesus "honor" his Father? Jesus said...

**"Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise." John 5:19**



They say that imitation is the highest form of flattery. Jesus honored his Father by following his lead in everything he did. And he also followed the Father's direction in everything he said. Jesus declared...

**“For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.” John 12:49-50**

So if Jesus honoured his Father by doing what the Father did and speaking what the Father told him to say, it only stands to reason that we should honour the Son by doing the same. Just as Jesus honour the Father by depending on him for everything, Jesus invites us to honour him by depending upon him for everything. He invited us to draw our life from him when he said...

**“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:5**

**Do you honour Jesus?**

**Fifth,**

**If God is my Father I will glory in Jesus the Son**

Jesus said to the crowd...

**“Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.” The Jews said to him, “Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, ‘If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.’ Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?” Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’” John 8:51-54**

How did the Father glorify the Son? The Father glorified Jesus by making him the source of eternal life for all who will believe in him and he accomplished that through Jesus' death on the cross. In John's Gospel the word “glorify” has a strong connection to the cross of Jesus Christ. In chapter twelve, John begins the movement of Jesus toward the cross and he signals it with this declaration by our Lord...

**“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” John 12:23**

And as Jesus prepared himself for the ordeal of the cross he prayed...



**“Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.” John 17:1-2**

We “glory in” Jesus when we celebrate the wonder of God’s grace in sending his Son to die for us and bear our punishment for sin upon the cross. The Apostle Paul was caught up with the wonder and glory of Jesus when he wrote...

**“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” Galatians 6:14 (KJV)**

We glory in Jesus when we are gripped with the reality that his cross accomplished everything that was needed so that God could give us the gift of eternal life and provide us with everything we need now and forever. Paul declared that those who are children of the Father...

**“glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh” Philippians 3:3**

The work of salvation was completely finished at the cross of Jesus! Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit!

**Do you glory in Jesus?**

**Finally,**

**If God is my Father I will worship Jesus the Son**

Jesus said to the crowd...

**“Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.” John 8:56-59**

Why did they try to kill him? Abraham lived roughly 2000 years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. If Jesus had merely wanted to say that he had existed before Abraham was born, he could have said, “Before Abraham was, I was.” That would have been hard enough for these men to take. But Jesus didn’t say that. He went much farther than that. He said, “Before Abraham was born, I am.” That little phrase, “I am,” was God-language in their ears!

Approximately fifteen hundred years before this dialogue in the temple, God had appeared to Moses in the desert of Sinai to tell him to lead the people of Israel



out of slavery in Egypt. Moses asked God, "If the people of Israel ask me your name, what shall I tell them?"

**"God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' " Exodus 3:14**

"I Am" ... everything!  
"I Am" ... always!  
"I Am" ... everywhere!  
"I Am" ... God!

When Moses met God that day in the desert he took off his shoes and worshipped because he knew he was standing on holy ground. That's what a child of God does with he meets the "I Am."

I read the story of a woman who had chosen 2 Tim 1:12 as her "life verse"...

**"Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day."**

She loved to share the verse with people who came to visit her. As her life moved along she was moved to a nursing home as her health began to fail. As her mind and memory began to give way, the verse got shorter and shorter in her retelling. As death neared, she called her family to her side to give them her final blessing. By this time, the verse had been reduced to one word, and she repeated it over and over again...

**"him"**

That was all she had left – but that was all she needed, because he was the "I Am" and he was everything for her.

**Do you worship Jesus?**

So, let me ask you one last time this morning...

**"Who's your father?"**

- **Invitation to Prayer Ministry**
- **Final Song:** Jesus Messiah
- **Benediction**

