

Before Abraham was, I Am

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Trinity) is John 8:48-59. This Gospel text is couched in Jesus' "I am" statements, here Jesus calling himself the light of the world (Jn 8:12; 9:5). Jesus connects light with life: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (8:12). Immediately after our reading, Jesus again says he is the light of the world.

"*The Jews*" is a phrase that occurs about 70 times in this Gospel. Here it refers to the delegation sent by the Sanhedrin to look into the activities of an unauthorized teacher.

This reading is the continuation of the very public debate Jesus was having with the Jews in Jerusalem. He had just pointed out to them that they were not of God but of the devil (8:39-47). Naturally they respond harshly, using some of the strongest insults they could muster up. Samaritans were considered ethnic and religious half-breeds, unclean, to be avoided at all costs. By attacking Jesus, they were attacking God and bringing eternal condemnation upon themselves. (TLSB)

Next they venerate Abraham as the standard in which to put down Jesus. Jesus tells them that by faith, Abraham saw God's plan of salvation fulfilled (Heb. 11:8-10). Jesus continues to point to the Word as to his Son-ship. The way to know the Word, who is God, who is Jesus, is to keep His Word. Believe the message of Jesus and you will never see eternal death.

Jesus points out that they didn't glorify Jesus because they didn't really know their own God anymore. For them to say they knew God but then to reject Jesus made them liars.

When Jesus says "*before Abraham was I am,*" he is making a solemnly emphatic declaration echoing God's great affirmation to the reluctant Moses in Ex 3:14. Jesus did not say "I was" but "I am," expressing the eternity of his being and his oneness with the Father. With this climactic statement Jesus concludes his speech.

The fact that Jesus is the great "I am" holds great meaning for us on a daily basis. It assures us that no matter what our day is like, he has been there for us every minute of our lives. And, that is going to continue until we reach eternity.

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, help us to be ever mindful of your constant care for us in all generations. Help us to have a desire to seek you constantly. Amen