

## ***“From Heaven or from Man?”***

Whenever you hear the Word of the Lord – like the Gospel reading for today – you should be asking yourself: “What are you doing here Jesus, and, what does this have to do with me?”

Here in our text for today, we hear that Jesus has come into the temple to teach – and immediately He is met with opposition. “Who are you to do such things?” What things? Well, Jesus has been teaching – He drove out of the temple all those who turned His house of prayer into a den of robbers – He healed the blind and the lame – He did John the Baptist type things, preaching repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Who do you think you are Jesus? By what authority do you do such things? Who sent you? Where are you from? And, in classic Jesus fashion – He responds to those who have set themselves against Him – not by answering their questions, but asking His own questions. “The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?”

And in classic antagonistic religious leader fashion, the chief priests and elders of the people chicken out. They didn’t believe that John the Baptist was from heaven (that is, sent by God). They didn’t accept his authority. But many of the people did, and being afraid, they gave a classic non-answer.

We should take note of Jesus’ response to those who fail to confess the truth. In essence He says, “then there is no teaching for you!”

Let me ask you a question. Does Jesus still come to His temple to do what He does here in our text? Does Jesus still come to God’s house, to dwell in the midst of us – to teach, to heal, to repent us so that our sins might be forgiven? Are you like the chief priests and the elders who do not believe?

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, sent from the Father – and to whom belongs all authority in heaven and on earth – comes to His temple today – not a church building, but the humble means He has chosen – where He promises to be at work “for you.”

Authoritative Jesus at work in preaching, promising His apostles that “he who hears you, hears me” – in Baptism, uniting you to His death and resurrection – in Absolution, promising that “whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” – in, with and under the bread and wine with His Body and Blood, “for the forgiveness of your sins.” Authoritative Jesus at work – to heal your body and soul – as we talked about Catechumens, to give you His Sabbath rest.

It’s hard to imagine that this teaching is true – and so easy to dismiss. Part of that has to do with the humble means He has chosen to be present in and at work through. These things don’t look profound, impressive, or powerful to our eyes.

We don’t come confessing our sins and to be baptized for the forgiveness of our sins – like the crowds that came to be baptized by John. We see Baptism as an act of the church – “from man” – so we don’t live in it daily, living as a child of God, thankful that all our sins have been washed away – with the hope that comes from being united to Christ’s death and resurrection, the certainty of our salvation, looking forward to the resurrection of our bodies, and the life everlasting.

Authoritative Jesus at work through a lowly, humble preacher. In Jesus’ day, the people (no doubt) saw John the Baptist as kind of an odd duck. Our pastor is ..... well, pretty common, like us. He likes Husker football and volleyball – he golfs, plays tennis, fishes and hunts. We see him at work but think, “he just doing his job, what we pay him to do.” In other words, we see him as “from man” and not “from God.”

Authoritative Jesus at work in humble Absolution. We recite the words printed in the hymnal – but do you even contemplate your sin? Confessing not just, “I am a sinner” – but specific sins – and being contrite (sorrowful) because you have failed to do what God has commanded you to do, and harmed your neighbor.

I justly deserve your punishment, O Lord, because I have let my wife down – I have forsaken the life of service to her, which is my God-given duty. I have harmed my children by not highlighting the “way of the Lord” and His work amongst us.

I have treasured the “things” and the “activities” of the world. I’m afraid to disappoint men, while despising, or ignoring, the things “from heaven.”

Authoritative Jesus at work in His holy, and humble Meal. Is this Supper from God, or from man? Do you prepare yourself to come before the Lord and handle “holy things” – things “from heaven” – the very Body and Blood of God Himself?

Do you kneel in humble faith, rejoicing that the Lord does not despise you – but exalts the lowly and treasures him with His life-giving Supper?

Dearly beloved, when you are gathered to hear God’s Word – it is not merely a history lesson – but Christ Himself coming into your midst to teach you. He comes to serve you – to be at work “for you.”

Thanks be to God that He is patient and merciful to us. He comes to teach you a lesson today – so that you would hear and believe all that is “from God” – that you would rejoice in the humble means of grace – the very Gospel of your salvation.

May the Lord grant us His Holy Spirit – to enlighten our minds – to purify our hearts – to rejoice in all the Divine gifts He brings to us this day – through which our sins are forgiven, and in which we have life and salvation.

Thanks be to God, who has come “from heaven” – that we might believe in Him and follow in His ways – even to heaven, and our life everlasting. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and your minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.