Like Father Like Son

JOHN 8:39-47

Good morning! I am Pastor Tami Lundgren, one of the associate pastors here at the OP campus. My husband Erik and I have been married 21 years and we have three kids, a 17 year daughter Isabella, a 16 year old son Nate, and a 12 year old son JT. And I tell you all that for a reason! Now, there are about a million things I love about my husband, he has thousands of wonderful qualities, but left to his own devices he tends to run a little behind schedule. This has always been the case. In fact, it is a favorite family story that while in high school a couple of his buddies were coming over to pick him up to go hang out at the previously agreed upon time, and they had placed bets on what state of unreadiness Erik would be in when they arrived. They decided that the over/under would be that he would be wearing jeans, no shirt, barefoot, with something to eat in his hand. And sure enough when they rang the doorbell Erik answered in jeans, but no shirt, barefoot and a sandwich in his hand. Bless his heart!

Again, this is a well told story in our family. So, it was with great pleasure and joy that my 16 year old related to us a very similar story earlier this summer. One night when Erik and I were on a date, Nate had been getting ready to go out with some friends and when they arrived to pick him up at the previously agreed upon time, he wasn’t quite ready. He had on jeans, but no shirt, no shoes, and was still eating the sandwich he had in his hand. It turns out that old adage can be frighteningly true…like father, like son.

And of course, this is not ALWAYS the case. There are plenty of examples of sons who have broken away from the hurts, hang-ups and habits of their father.
This is not a universal truth. But there is a reason this saying is so popular, both today, and 2000 years ago.

In fact, this idea that a son will act like his father, is the heart of our passage today. So, turn with me to John chapter 8:39-47, (read scripture here on Sunday). I have just 2 points for you today, and I'm going to tell them to you now, while I have your attention! And then I'll unpack them for you.

**Point 1 - The truth will either offend you or convict you.**

**Point 2 - The only way to be a child of God is to abide in the Truth. Truth is a person and his name is Jesus.**

Before we begin, I want to make sure everyone is all caught up with where we are starting today. Jesus is teaching in and interacting with a crowd of people, which likely consists of Pharisees, and other Jewish leaders, along with some Jews who throughout his teachings and interactions had come to believe in him. Not too long ago, at the beginning of chapter 8 the Pharisees had tried to trap Jesus by making him either violate the mosaic law or break Roman rule. But when the trap back fired, and the Pharisees were humiliated in front of a very similar crowd of people, the plans to kill Jesus began.

In verse 12, we find Jesus once again speaking to the Pharisees. And throughout the next 20 verses and all the dialogue that took place many Jews believed in him we see that at the very end of verse 30. Then in verse 31, Jesus speaks directly to “the Jews who had believed in him.” Which sounds like maybe they had believed in him at one point but for some reason stopped. But I don’t think that’s the case. In Greek ( and I am NO geek with the Greek) -but if I read it correctly - in Greek, this is a perfect participle. Which means it is a past action carried into the future. The had believed and still do believe in him. Which would
mean Jesus is in a crowd of people, some of who believe in him, and some who do not. The Pharisees and other Jewish leaders are likely still there. So when Jesus, in verse 32, tells those who believe in him, to abide in his word and “then they will know the truth and the truth will set them free.” The non-believing Jews are offended. Pastor Greg did a great job of unpacking all of this last week. If you missed it, I encourage you to go back later today and watch that sermon.

Verse 32 is the first of MANY offenses Jesus makes in this coming dialogue. Because he is speaking the truth to people who don’t want to hear the truth. **And when a person is confronted with truth one of two things will happen. They will either be offended or they will be convicted.** We are sinful people and when we come face to face with truth, we are forced to recognize that sinfulness. And it will either greatly offend us, or it will convict us and lead to everlasting change. The Jewish leaders of course chose for the former - they are offended and continue to get more and more offended the longer Jesus talks. In fact in verse 38 Jesus offends a second time when he says **“I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.”**

The ESV (and many other translations) translates Jesus words here as “my Father” - “I speak of what I have seen with my Father,” however in the original Greek it reads **“the Father”** - I speak of what I have seen with THE Father. An arguably important distinction - there is a father, and then there is the Father. And this comment is the catalyst of our entire passage today. Even using the ESV translation Jesus is clearly distinguishing there is a difference between HIS father, and the father that the Jews have been listening to. So in verse 39 where our passage picks up the Jews respond to this second offense by Jesus.

The Jews answer him, “Abraham is our Father.” To the Jews in the 1st century Abraham was THE greatest figure in all of religious history and as physical descendants of Abraham the Jews considered themselves safe and secure in the
favor of God solely based on their familial connection to Abraham. Abraham was so good, so obedient to God, that his goodness was not only sufficient to merit him a place with God, but also granted all his descendants a place with God - even centuries later. Justin Martyr a second century church father, documented this belief in *The Dialogue with Trypho*, in it he wrote, “*[Jews believe] the eternal kingdom will be given to those who are the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, even though they be sinners, and unbelievers and disobedient to God.*” (*The Dialogue with Trypho*, 140).

We might find this Jewish way of thinking to be ridiculous. Our Western culture prides a person on their individuality, it is good to separate from our family of origin and make our own way, earn our own success. We don't look to our family roots to prove our worth. Our worth comes from our own hard work. Or does it? There are plenty of people in our culture today who trade on their pedigree and their name, even in the Evangelical Christian world. There are churches who believe their past ministry, their history or tradition, will be enough to carry them forward. The good work they have done in the past, will carry them indefinitely into the future. But this is simply not the case. Colonial, we must continue to walk in step with the Spirit at all times, year after year, generation after generation.

Jesus responds to the Jews familial claim with a conditional sentence. In fact this whole passage is essentially one big conditional IF/THEN argument. If A is true then B would happen, but if B does not happen, then A can’t be true. “If you were Abraham’s children, [then] 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.” B has not happened, The Jews claimed to be children of Abraham, but Abraham welcomed God’s messenger. In Gen 18:1-8 when Abraham encountered a messenger from God, he welcomed him -
he ran out to greet him, prepared an extravagant meal for him, and served him. He certainly didn’t try to kill him. Abraham fully trusted God - In chapter 22, God tests Abraham, asking for a sacrifice of his only son. And Abraham, trusting in God, laid Isaac on the alter, passing the test. And of course, God saves his son. Abraham believed what God said and followed his commands - Genesis 15:6 claims, “Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

The Jews knew all of this - these stories were as familiar to them as the names of their family members. They knew exactly how Abraham responded to God, and it was NOT how they responded to Jesus.

Jesus goes on to complete his if/then argument, since B has not happened A can’t be true. “If Abraham were your Father, [then] you would act like Abraham did. [Since you are not acting like Abraham did, Abraham cannot be your Father.] You are doing the works your Father did.” - Your Father who is clearly not Abraham. And this is OFFENSE #3

So the Jews respond to OFFENSE #3. And in verse 41, they said to him, ‘We were not born of sexual immorality.” Two things are revealed by this statement. 1. The Jews have very selective memory. And I get it! I really do! I have 2 teenagers and a preteen. There is nothing in my life that has prepared me for raising teenagers. There are days they make me pull my hair out and weep into a pillow. I was on the phone the other day complaining to my mom about something one of my kids had done, expecting her unwavering love and support and compassion and instead she starts laughing!

And she says, “Remember when you did that?”
I responded with, “Um, I most certainly did NOT do that Mom!”

“Yes you did! Remember in high school?”

Clearly, she has me confused with my older brother Kevin, I did NOT do that!

“Sweetie, yes you did!” She insisted. I have zero recollection of this transgression - zero!

There are times we honestly don’t remember the mistakes we have made, your mind chooses not to dwell on those and they eventually fade. Other times, we simply are unwilling to admit those mistakes. And that is what we see here. The Jews insist they were not born from sexual immorality, and perhaps they physically, literally were not. But they are well aware that over and over again the OT refers to the marriage between God and the nation of Israel - she is his bride, his often unfaithful bride, the book of Hosea draws out this imagery through the whole book of the adulterous Israel, unfaithful to her union with God and bearing children out of this unfaithfulness, out of immorality. The Claim here that these people are not children of an adulterous nation was completely false. They KNEW that - and Jesus KNEW that! They were claiming they had NEVER gone astray from God, never fallen, never been punished or taken into captivity. And they knew that was absolutely not the case. They were once again, denying truth and choosing to believe a lie.

The second thing this statement revealed, was something that would come up in the years and decades following Jesus life. In order to discredit Jesus, and the claims his followers made about him, the Jews questioned Jesus birth. While Christians from the beginning preached Jesus miraculous birth, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, the Jews most certainly did not. Accepting
the virgin conception would mean accepting who Jesus really was, so the Jews did everything in their power to discredit Mary. According to William Berclay, in later years there is solid documentation of Jews slandering Mary, claiming she had been unfaithful to Joseph with a Roman soldier named Panthera. Jesus was not conceived by the Holy Spirit they claimed, but by this Roman soldier.

If ANYONE in this crowd was illegitimate, the Jews were saying, it certainly was not them!

So they double down on their earlier defense. Their one and only Father is God himself- an even greater claim than Abraham being their Father. This wasn’t a new idea, throughout the OT there is language that God was in a special way the Father of his people Israel

- In Exodus 4:22 God says to Moses “You shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son”
- Deut 32:6. “Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?”
- We see similar language in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Malachi 2:10.

So the claim is understandable. But, that doesn’t make it true.

Jesus goes back to the same argument. If A, then B, if not B, then not A. “If God were your Father, [then] you would love me. For I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.” You have chosen not to listen. Other Jews listened and they believed. But not these Jews. Throughout this entire discourse they have repeatedly missed what Jesus was saying - refusing to listen or to understand. So Jesus makes it abundantly clear in his next statement. You have not done B, so A is not true. “If God were your
Father, [then] you would love me. You do not love me, or listen to me, so God is not your father.

“You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.” And this is offense #4 and a complete slap in the face. But Jesus knows their hearts. He knows what they are thinking. He knows what their plans are. And He knows a son will manifest his Father’s characteristics. Like Father, like son. The Devil was a murderer from the beginning we see this in chapter 3 of Genesis - when he deceives Eve and seals the fate for the whole human race. The devil murders goodness, chastity, honor, honesty, and beauty, peace of mind, happiness, and love. He is a murderer. And remember that even as Jesus speaks, the Jews are also plotting his murder. The devil has no truth in him, he is a liar and the father of lies. Scholar William Hendriksen says it perfectly when he says, “The devil, then, is the very wellspring of lies, the creator of falsehoods. When he lies, he is original. When he does not lie, he quotes or even plagiarizes; but even then he gives the borrowed words a false setting, in order to create an illusion. He ever strives to lie and deceive, and this he does in order to murder.” (New Testament Commentary: John, 61).

Lies and truth cannot co-exist. Lies will always destroy the truth and the truth will always destroy a lie. One will always destroy the other. The Jews wanted no part of the truth, and because Jesus spoke truth, he could not co-exist with their lies. And they would use lies to eventually murder the Son of God. Like Father, Like Son.

Jesus then offers a challenge, and offends them yet again… “Which one of you convicts me of sin?” It’s really important to feel the tension this challenge brought. Remember that not long ago, these men were trying to trap Jesus
because they couldn’t find any other way to get rid of him. So feel their unease when Jesus speaks these words, “What have I ever done that would make me a liar or disprove what I have said?” There must have been a long pause here - silence as Jesus waits - knowing he has committed no sin; knowing they have nothing on which to doubt his words. I imagine Jesus scanning the crowd, knowing, no one could honestly step forward with a claim against him. And once the silence had become unbearable Jesus simply says, “If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?”

Again, silence, a seemingly rhetorical question with no possible answer except... “Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.” And this is the final offense in this section. You see, The Jews believed the Spirit of God had two primary functions. One, He revealed God’s truth to people; and two he made it possible for people to recognize and grasp that truth when they saw it. If the Spirit of God was truly inside someone- if they really were of God - they would absolutely be able to hear his words - the words of Jesus - and believe them. Since they would not listen to Jesus, they simply could not be of God. The Jews had closed their hearts to God and that’s why they neither recognized Jesus nor believed him. From here things quickly deteriorate. And Pastor Jim will be back next week to walk us through that. But for today, what are we to get out of this passage?

1. The truth will either offend you or convict you.

Throughout this passage Jesus is continually offending people with the truth. Because honestly, truth IS offensive - it was then, and it is now. When you encounter the truth of Jesus one of two things will happen. He will either offend you or he will convict you. Jesus did not come to earth to make us feel better...
about ourselves. He didn’t come to tell us we were doing an ok job on our own. He came to tell us we are sinners, and that the only way to eternal life is through him, He is the truth, He is the way and He is the life. If you have not been offended by Jesus OR convicted by his words, then ask yourself if you are really listening. The words of Jesus should make you uncomfortable, because you are not doing an ok job on your own. You have sin in your life, still today that you need to let the truth of Jesus convict you about. I know you probably don’t want to hear that. It’s not really the message I want to preach - but this is the passage Pastor Jim gave me, and this is what it says. Search out those areas of your life that you have not let the truth into yet? Where do you choose to ignore the truth of Jesus life and words? Do you let pride get in your way instead of being truly humble? Are you quick to gossip? Do you have sin patterns or addictions that you indulge instead of deny? Do you covet possessions or money? Do you give only out of your excess and never sacrificially? Have you allowed the words of Jesus to convict you?

This isn’t an intellectual exercise but a living sense that God is with us. We stand always in his presence. He KNOWS about the sin in our life - he has known it all along. God knows exactly what you have been doing. You can’t hide it from him, because nothing is hidden from Him. He wants all of you, without reservation, without hesitation. It’s not a process of studying one more verse, attending one more Bible study, hearing one more speaker. It is the hard work of yielding to truth and letting the truth convict you.

2. The only way to be a child of God is to abide in the truth. Truth is a person and his name is Jesus.

There are essentially three categories of people in this story. There is Jesus - and in general when you are placing yourself in the story, you should shy away
from putting yourself in the position of Jesus. Just a helpful hint - that’s not your role. And then there are the children of God and the children of the devil - and let me be clear - you are either one or the other, you cannot be both. We ALL want to be the children of God!! And we are! But this is so very important...the only way to be a child of God, is to abide in the truth. In all areas of your life.

Jesus spent this whole dialogue explaining to the Jews that IF A is true, B must happen, if B does not happen, A cannot be true. BUT here is the good news. If A is true then B must happen, if B happens then A IS TRUE!! You are a child of God when you love Jesus and listen to his words. If you love Jesus and you listen to his truth, then you ARE A CHILD OF GOD!!!! This is what Jesus said back in verse 32, If you hold to his teaching, if you model his way of thinking. If you abide in his words, then you are really his disciples - you are truly a child of God and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. If you allow the truth of Jesus and the words he said to guide your life - all parts of your life. You are a child of God. You are.

Let’s pray.