

True Freedom Fifth Week of Lent Friday, March 27, 2015 8:15 AM Jer 20:10-13;
Jn 8:31-42 (So how do we know what's true? Well, Jesus gives us a criterion. He said, "The truth will make you free.")

This reading from John's Gospel is a bit difficult to comprehend because it starts off that Jesus is talking to those who follow him, in fact who believed in him, and yet it becomes very hostile. So **why is Jesus now speaking in such a hostile way toward his followers?** That's the question.

Well, we know in the early Church there were great disagreements. When you read St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians, he is hopping mad because many of his followers and believers in Christ are nonetheless really **not following through with this sense of liberation from the tradition of the elders.** The tradition of the elders was this complex oral system of Law and regulation that was rabbinic Judaism, which Jesus did not appreciate or follow, and St. Paul didn't either once he became a Christian. Once Paul realized Christ was really raised from the dead, he realized that this was a judgment against this tradition of the elders. Well, **there were those Christians that saw this, connected the dots, and those Christians that didn't.**

The same in John's community. There were those who believed in Jesus, called themselves Christians, but who still wanted to follow the tradition of the elders, who wanted to remain enclosed. And it all has to do with who is God really. That is really the ultimate issue: **Who is God? Jesus keeps saying I have come to reveal the Father.** And they say, well, they have two different statements. They say, "Abraham is our father," which is a statement of ethnic identity, which Jesus had no time for. And the second thing they say is "God is our father." He says, yeah, but you don't know who you are talking about. **I'm trying to tell you who God is, and you think you already know. And this is the problem.**

Now at the end it becomes extremely negative where he says your father is the devil. Well, of course that can't be literal. He didn't really mean they were children of the devil. But what he means is that **the devil, who is the father of lies, begets children who are deceived.** So that's what he is saying. You are deceived; you don't know what you are talking about. And this could be said of many people who are true believers. So there is no

real contradiction, although there seems there is. **Many true believers don't believe the truth.** They are really believers, they believe, and they believe what they think is true, but they are deceived. This is the problem. It's a problem in Christianity. It's a problem in Judaism. It's a problem in Islam in particular. I am not sure you can talk about real believers in other religions, but wherever you can there is the problem of being deceived. And that is not going away, this problem. In fact, in a way, the modern world makes it a little worse because **the modern world seems to think that there is no objective criterion for belief.** Everyone's belief is equal—whatever you say. And they have all these attempts to garner people's opinions. Pew Research: What do you think? Well, does that really matter? This gospel would indicate it doesn't matter too much, what people think about God or about themselves or what they claim. **What really matters is what is true.** That's something else.

So how do we know what's true? Well, Jesus gives us a criterion. He said, "The truth will make you free." So that's the criterion he offers us. If our faith makes us free, if it frees us to be children of God, if it frees us from every shackle of superstition and ignorance and bias and bigotry and darkness and malice, well, then it's true. That will make us free. That's what freedom is. **Freedom is the ability to be like Jesus.** He was free. He didn't really care what other people thought. He didn't care what other people believed. And he didn't care what other people did. **He did what he saw the Father doing.** That's freedom. And we will be free when we have achieved that same freedom, that same ability to do what we see the Father doing, and when our lives mirror his—then we will be free; and that is the goal.