

Livin' the Life
The True Children of God
John 8:39-47
August 26, 2018
David Taylor

We are looking at the life of Jesus and the life he promises in our series on the Gospel of John, Livin' the Life. Today's message, The True Children of God, is from 8:39-47. Please turn to John 8:39-47 and read along or listen as we read God's word.

If you remember, Jesus is speaking to those who believed in him. What he is doing is clarifying what it means to believe, to really be a disciple. Genuine disciples are those who abide in his word (31). Abiding in Jesus is evidence of genuine saving faith. Then Jesus promises that those who abide in Jesus, will know the truth and the truth will set them free (32). Jesus wants them (and us) to ask, do I have genuine faith? Am I really a disciple/Christian? Then he goes on to say that because they seek to kill him, they are not children of Abraham but children of another father. At that point, the conversation shifts to who are true children of Abraham, and more importantly, who are true children of God. In this conversation, Jesus describes five characteristics of true children of God.

The Jews are offended that Jesus would suggest that Abraham is not their father (39) so they appeal to their ethnicity as proof. We are Jews, the chosen people of God, the seed of Abraham! They think they are children of God because they are Jews. But Jesus argues differently, saying they are nothing like Abraham. What Jesus says is that the true children of God have faith like Abraham (40). Abraham lived a life of faithful obedience to God's word (Heb 11:8-10). Yet they reject Jesus's message/word and so they are more like another father (41). True children of God obey Jesus' message as the word of God. That is, they repent of their sin and unbelief and believe in Jesus. So, the first characteristic of a true child of God is that they have faith like Abraham.

Next, Jesus says that true children of God love Jesus (41-42). When Jesus declares that they are not children of Abraham, they appeal to religion. We have God as our Father (41). We are good Jews, we do not need you to save us! But listen to what Jesus argues, if God were your Father then you would love me, for I came from God and he sent me (42). By rejecting Jesus, they show that they are not true children of God *no matter what they claim*. So, what does it mean to love Jesus? Well, we all do the things we love! We pursue them and if necessary, we will change our schedule around so we can do in them. We will do what is necessary to do the things we love. So if you love Jesus, you will do what is necessary to pursue him. Not because you have to but because you want to do so. But don't say you love Jesus and do nothing to intentionally pursue him. We all make time for those things that we love to do and are important to us. The issue is really desire, not time. And those things we know are in our best interests, we make time for even when in the moment we may not want to do it. So, the second characteristic of true children of God is that they love Jesus.

Third characteristic that Jesus describes is that true children of God embrace His Word (43). Jesus tells the Jews they are not true children of God because they refuse to hear his word. They refuse to hear and obey God's word. It has no influence in their lives. Psalm 81 tells us that after God delivered Israel in the Exodus, they would not listen to his word nor submit to him (Ps 81:4-16). God in Jesus visited Israel to deliver them again and they responded the same way. They did not listen to his voice, they did not submit to him. God's children recognize their need for God's voice through God's word and obey it. The third characteristic of true children of God is that they embrace God's word.

Then Jesus argues that true children of God desire to do as their Father does (44). Jesus drops a bombshell, telling the Jews that they are of their father the devil, having the same desires the devil does (44). But this is not a Jewish problem, this is a human problem. Our sinful condition is so deep, it aligns us with the devil and makes us blind and deaf to spiritual truth. This is why Jesus must free us from our sin by making us alive to him in the new birth (1:11-13; 3:1-8). The new birth is the work of God in which he implants new desires and wants in us so that we desire the things God desires.

Outside of the new birth, we are all children of the devil, having the same desires he does. We are all rebellious at heart, even in our moralism. Humanistic morality is contaminated by evil because it is in rebellion to God (Eph 2:1-3; 1 J 3:8). So, the fourth characteristic of true children of God is that they desire to do what God desires.

Lastly, Jesus says that true children of God believe the truth (45-46). Jesus concludes that some of those who had believed in him (30) do not believe. How can they believe and not believe? They have some form of belief in Jesus but it is not saving faith. Whoever is of God hears (obeys) the words of God, the reason you do not hear (obey) my words is that you are not of God (47). This is the language of John 1:11-13, the children of God are not born of human means but of God.

Let me clarify, we are not saved by works, we are saved by faith alone, in Christ alone. We are not saved by works but we will never be saved without good works. Good works do not save us but good works are the evidence or fruit of genuine faith. Faith is the root that hopes in God and good works are the fruit of faith. The conversation started because there were some Jews who believed and Jesus clarified what it really means to believe, so they would count the cost and commitment to follow Jesus. He did not want anyone to have a false assurance.

The true children of God have faith like Abraham, a love for Jesus, obey God's word, and desire to do God's will because they are of God.

Do you believe? Faithful obedience like Abraham?

Do you love Jesus? Evidence?

Do you embrace God's word? Reading it and listening God's voice in God word?

Do you desire what Father desires? Live a life of repentance and faith?

