

JOHN 5:36-47

9th Sunday after Pentecost, July 25 2021

Smith

A HOSPITAL FOR SINNERS

³⁶ **“I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me. ³⁷ And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, ³⁸ nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. ³⁹ You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me to have life.**

⁴¹ **“I do not accept glory from human beings, ⁴² but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. ⁴³ I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. ⁴⁴ How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?**

⁴⁵ **“But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. ⁴⁶ If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. ⁴⁷ But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?”**

A frustrated woman was afraid of her landlord. She was behind in her rent, and she had lost her job, and she just didn't know how she was going to make ends meet. Her landlord mailed her a letter, and since she thought it was a reminder that her rent was overdue, she threw it away, pretending it never came. Another letter followed that one into the trash. And another. Finally, the landlord came in person and knocked, but she pretended she wasn't home. But all this time the landlord had been trying to tell her that someone had paid her rent. He was just trying to give her an address so that she could write a thank-you note. Her pride and her fear were keeping the message from getting through, but she was also ignoring his words. That was the problem the Jews were having with Jesus.

The chief purpose of the Bible is “to lead all people to know and believe in Jesus as their only hope of salvation.” Every word of the Bible is dedicated to that purpose. Some of the Scriptures preach the Law to crush those who are comfortable in their sins, and the rest of the Scriptures preach the Gospel to comfort who are crushed by the guilt of their sins.

Jesus had healed a man, an invalid, at one of the public water sources in Jerusalem called the Pool of Bethesda, just a few yards from the north wall of the Temple. Some of the Jewish leaders were upset that Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath day, and they began to accuse him of breaking the Sabbath, when people were supposed to refrain from working. This led to a deeper debate about Jesus calling himself the Son of God. They knew perfectly well that God’s Son would be equal to God the Father in every way.

Jesus pointed to his miracles as a testimony to his divine nature. We accept all of Jesus' miracles as true, that they happened just as they're described in the Bible. And here was a man standing with the Jews who had been an invalid for almost 40 years, now healed for about 40 minutes. They couldn't deny that it happened, although there are those today who would deny that it happened.

But there stands Jesus, with power in his words, love and healing in his heart. The Son of God, compassionate and aching to rescue mankind from our sins.

Jesus pointed to the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. All of them point to him, and to him alone. Jesus had opponents who were very well-versed in those Scriptures. They were concerned about every little mark and dot, but they missed the big picture. Now, it's a fine and godly thing to want to preserve the text of the Holy Scriptures. But they were so wrapped up in preserving the text that they didn't look up when the one who was foretold was right in front of them. And there are those today who still fail to look up and see their Savior.

There stands Jesus, fulfilling every word and promise of the text. The Son of God, compassionate and aching to rescue mankind from our sins.

If someone rejects Jesus, what will happen to them? What if they are like these Scribes, these experts in the text that were arguing with Jesus and accusing him of claiming to be the Christ? To reject Jesus is to reject the *meaning* of the entire Scriptures, all 39 books of the Old Testament and all 27 books of the new. Now, if someone rejects their Savior, should their parents be blamed? Certainly not, if that child was shown their Savior, if they were given opportunities like hearing the word of God in worship, taking Catechism classes, Sunday School lessons, Lutheran Elementary school years, or Jesus Cares instruction. You did what parents are given to do. A child's unbelief does not rest on your head, even if it hangs heavily on your heart.

You can still now pray for them, leave an open door to them. Even if the church had to close its doors, parents never need to. Your love for them will stay in their minds until they close their eyes for the last time, and who knows but that your faithful example will be the thing that finally pulls them back into the arms of Jesus at the last possible moment of their Time of Grace? Do not give up hope.

There stands Jesus, always ready to receive the ones he calls. The Son of God, compassionate and aching to rescue mankind from our sins.

Verse 39 is a very important passage that we ask our children to memorize. Listen to it again and fill in the blanks in your worship card as I do. Jesus said: **You study the Scriptures diligently**

because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me. Here in John 5, this verse is a sermon of Law, condemning those who rejected him and who didn't believe that the words of the Bible testify about him. But for us, for all who believe, these words are also Gospel, because by saying this, Jesus means that the words are true.

And what do these words teach us? They don't proclaim a new law: Believe this or else. No, the message of the Gospel is the message of God's grace. Grace is the love God has because he's God. Grace is the love God shows because he loves. Grace is the love we don't deserve, but which we're given anyway because God is gracious.

There might be a silly person or a superficial person who get's upset when they hear that God doesn't save us because we're lovable or savable, or hurt when they learn that they aren't the cause of their own salvation. God didn't look at me and think: He deserves my pity, my mercy, my grace. No, God looked at me and said, "He deserves to be damned to hell forever for his sins, but I'm going to save him anyway."

How could my response be anything but joy and love and gratitude? If God had been fair with me, I would have no hope. The burning coals of hell would be under my bare feet forever. The torture of hell would be my choking throat and the bruises and gashes and never-healing broken bones and running sores in my flesh for all eternity; the loneliness of hell, the pain of hell, the terror of what's behind every corner, every sharp stone, inside every smoking cave of hell would be my constant dread and fear.

But Jesus rescued me. But there stands Jesus, with gentle words, welcoming me and beckoning to me at the Gate of Paradise. The Son of God, saying "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

It's enough to make death a welcome doorway, an "at long last" moment, not to be feared, but only voyaged through, like the rapids at the end of the whitewater trip before you're finally home.

Here in the fellowship of the Church, we are a hospital for sick souls, for broken hearts, for frightened sinners. The one medicine is the Gospel of God's grace, the healing that Jesus offers to everyone. Believe what Jesus says and what Jesus did, and remember that when I say "Believe" it isn't a command, but an invitation. It's the cure for your sin. It's the medicine of eternity. Trust in Jesus and you will have eternal life.

And while we're here together in the E.R. of the Lutheran Church, patients of the Gospel, remember to be patient, too. Be patient with other sinners as they stumble and fall; think of your

fellow sinners as people in the waiting room with oxygen tanks and broken bones and sad looks in their eyes.

But you, sick but saved sinner, be patient with yourself. God the Father looked at the world after the waters of flood dried up and he said to himself: “It’s still true: Every inclination of man’s heart is still always sinful, all the time.” We want to make changes in our lives, changes that say “Thank you” to Jesus. Then we stumble into the same old sins. It’s not going to end. We try. We ask God to help us. And he does help us. But when you stumble, be patient.

There stands Jesus. Put your faith in him as he holds out his hand to you. His is the only hand you want; the only help you ever need in this hospital for sinners.