

This transcribed message has been lightly edited and formatted for the Web site. No attempt has been made, however, to alter the basic extemporaneous delivery style, or to produce a grammatically accurate, publication-ready manuscript.

Teaching: Carlon Tschetter
Series: The Gospel of John
Message: Don't Mess With Jesus

Transcribed Message
January 4, 2026
John 8:48-59

In 2023, Karl Truman wrote an article called, “Are Evangelical Leaders as Courageous as J.K. Rowling?” J.K. Rowling, of course, everybody knows, is the author of the Harry Potter series. I looked it up this last week. Over 600 million copies of that series have been sold. So probably more than a billion people potentially have read J.K. Rowling. Well, J.K. Rowling is a self-described liberal feminist. And Karl Truman's asking the question, are evangelical leaders, primarily in the Church of America today, are they more courageous than she is? And he asked that question because while she's a liberal feminist by her own description, she has been an outspoken critic of the transgender movement. And at some cost to her in terms of how people view her and don't appreciate that opinion.

But he's asking that question, not just, I think, of the evangelical leadership, but I think it could be pressed in to ask us as well. When we know that our views and that our convictions are potentially going to be costly, what do we do? Are we bold, are we courageous, or are we silent in the face of those things? Well, if we're following Jesus' example, then we're certainly going to be bold, and we're going to speak the truth, and we're going to do so courageously.

So, we're back in the Gospel of John. I'm glad we're back in the Gospel of John. We're in the 8th chapter. We're going to finish up the 8th chapter this morning in verses 48 through 59. And this is what we want to see. This matter of defending the Gospel and enlarge it beyond that. Just defending, not just the Gospel, but think in terms of the truth, right? Defending the truth, no matter the cost. And that's what we are called to do, isn't it? Because what Jesus has claimed, and what He has claimed for Himself, and what He has claimed for us to walk in is something that simply cannot be ignored.

Let's do a quick review of the first 8 chapters. If you're just joining us this morning, you haven't even been with us in the Gospel of John, this will catch you up. The rest of us,

we've been out of the book for a month. Let's take these first 8 chapters and put forward 5 things that will help us come back together. And the first one is to remind us again, the key verses, John 20, verses 30 and 31. These things, John says, he's written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life in His name. John tells us at the end of the Gospel why he put forward this particular Gospel.

And it is so that, secondly, the desired outcome and result of reading this book would be that people would, in fact, believe. John does this, and he brings together all of the elements and the stories of the Gospel of John, not to give us a biography of the life of Jesus. We've said that repeatedly. It's true, of course, of all the Gospel writers. They're not writing biographies. They're writing preludes to the cross. But John, in particular, is not writing a biography. He's writing an apologetic. The whole point of it is, I'm putting forward all these things so that you will, in fact, see Jesus as who He claims to be, the Son of God, and that you would believe and have life in His name.

In doing that, how does John accomplish his purpose? Well, he puts forward these 7 signs. And the 7 signs, we've seen just a few of them already. We saw, of course, first of all, the changing of water to wine, the healing of the nobleman's son. We saw him healing the man by the Pool of Siloam. We'll see the healing of the blind man, Lord willing, beginning next Sunday in chapter 9. You have 7 things that John says these are specific signs indicating that Jesus is not just a man. He is the Son of God.

And beyond that, then Jesus makes 7 I Am statements. And these 7 I Am statements, 7 of them follow with the predicate in which Jesus says, yeah, I'm the bread of life. I'm the light of the world. I'm the door. And He goes right on to give us these 7 statements that, again, set apart Jesus from everybody else and show how unique He is. And then we have 7 I Ams, *ego ami's*. We're going to see one again this morning that doesn't have a predicate. Just Jesus says, I am. We'll see the significance of that again.

Then lastly, point E, the temple discourse that we've been in now all through the 8th chapter really started back in chapter 7 and at chapter 10. It's highly antagonistic. It's filled with personal attacks. And I think there's something for us to learn even in that regard. As we look at the life of our Lord, we'll see it again this morning. I mean, here He is, very God of

very God, very man of very man. Walking among that which we just sang about that He has, in fact, created. And He comes under great attack.

Let's look at this together. I've just entitled our lesson this morning, Here We Go Again. And here we go again, because we're going to see a lot of the same things that John has underscored to this point in his gospel. In particular, we're going to see three exchanges that take place between Jesus and the religious leaders. And in these three exchanges, there's going to be an accusation made. And then Jesus is going to make a reply. And then in those three exchanges, He is going to reveal something about Himself to them in addition to this intercourse.

So, the setting. If you haven't been with us, the last exchange that they had, remember, Jesus said to them, you guys are of your father, the devil. Now, it doesn't take too much to realize when we get into this next section that they did not forget that those words are still ringing in their ears, that Jesus would actually accuse them, the highest religious leaders of their day and time, and that they would somehow or other, in His opinion, be connected to the evil one. Let's look at the first accusation and the first reply in verses 48 through 51.

It starts off with this accusation in verse 48. The Jews answered Him, are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon? The first accusation is, you're a Samaritan.

Now, I don't know the last time I've told a lawyer joke. I don't generally tell lawyer jokes. I have friends who are lawyers, but this one fits right here, okay? Two lawyers, one an older one, one a younger one. And the older one is mentoring the younger one. And he says to him, now, when you are presenting a case and you have case law on your side, by all means, spend all your time and energy and focus on case law. If you, in your case, have the evidence on your side, when you're arguing your case, focus all your energy, all your attention, all your time on the evidence. If you don't have case law and you don't have the evidence on your side, spend all your time attacking the other lawyer. And so that's what's happening here. They don't have case law. They don't have evidence. All they can do is offer personal attacks against Jesus. And that's what's happening.

When they say, you're a Samaritan. Now, we hear that, and here we are thousands of years later, and it doesn't even sound that terrible, does it? You're a Samaritan. We don't really connect with that. We saw a little bit of the picture of that in John 4. Remember when Jesus encounters the woman at the well? She's a Samaritan. And John starts off that fourth chapter and said, Jesus had to pass through Samaria to get to where he wanted to go. Well, he didn't have to pass through Samaria. He purposely went through Samaria. He had to, not in the sense of geography, because Jews hated the Samaritans so much they wouldn't even walk through their land. They would go around it. You get a little bit of the sense of the animosity between these groups. If you're a Jew and you wanted to insult another Jew in the most powerful way, you would call him a Samaritan. It would be today of an ethnic racial slur that somebody would say to somebody else that they disliked and they despised. That's what's happening here. These people literally despised and hated each other. When they're thinking of what they can say to Jesus to really insult him, to really personally attack him – well, let's call him a Samaritan. And they do that.

Then you notice, secondly, they say you're demonized. Are we not right in saying that you're a Samaritan and have a demon? And in fact, when they start off that sentence and they say, are we not right in saying that? They're really saying, in effect, this is the popular opinion about you. The popular opinion about you, Jesus. I don't know if you're aware of this. I don't know if you're mindful of this. But when people of this day think about you, they think of you as being demonized, which is a rather radical thing, isn't it? But look back in chapter 7 and verse 20. And that's exactly what we read back there. The crowd answered, you have a demon. Who is seeking to kill you? The same thing happens in chapter 10 and verse 20. They think that he is demonized. In Mark's gospel, the third chapter, the people of his own family think that he's got something that's gone wrong emotionally, mentally. That was often the way they viewed people who were struggling and having some breaks with reality. They're thinking of them in terms like this. The irony, of course, is over the top, isn't it? Because Jesus, as I said before, had just said to them, you're of your father, the devil. Now they turn right around and say, no, we're not. But you are. You're a Samaritan and you are, in fact, demonized.

What amazes you about Jesus when he has these kinds of encounters? I mean, again, I understand that for us, it's hard to emotionally connect with being called a Samaritan. But, you know, we can think of language of our current day and time in which someone says something very hateful and very mean and calls us something. Well, that's what's happening here. And yet, what do you see in the life of our Lord? You see incredible grace, amazing patience. He never veers off into anything other than just continuing to remind them of the truth. In fact, he's going to offer them forgiveness and eternal life. That's the next thing that we see.

Look at his response. There's a two-part reply. In that two-part reply, there's the revelation that Jesus makes of himself that I am the giver of eternal life. I'm the giver of eternal life. Jesus starts off in verse 49 to 50 and says, you couldn't be more wrong. Jesus answered, I do not have a demon, but I honor my father and you dishonor me. Yet I do not seek my own glory. There is one who seeks it and he is the judge. Jesus, in effect, is answering the question, what is his life goal and mission, right? I do not have a demon, but I honor my father.

We asked the question last week, what's the chief end of man? Why are we here? What is your purpose in being on this earth, living out your life? You're answering that in one way or another, whether consciously or unconsciously. Something is dictating, something is bringing some form of meaning and purpose into your life, or there is despair, right? Jesus is, in effect, saying in answer to the question, why am I here? What is my purpose? He helps us to see it so clearly. He says, I'm here to honor the Father. I'm here in answering that question. I want to glorify God and enjoy him forever. He's, of course, speaking of his heavenly Father. You disregard me, he says, in effect, at your own peril, because this is the goal of my life and you come under judgment if you view me in the way that you have said.

The second thing he says is I can't make a promise any greater than this. I cannot make you a promise any greater than the one I make in verse 51. Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death. It is, again, another affirmation on the part of our Lord that he is, in fact, God. It is his word that he says brings eternal life.

And here's the same formula that we've seen repeatedly. Truly, truly, amen, amen. Pay attention, sit up, take notice, listen to what I'm going to say. If you keep my word, which is almost like a synonym for if you believe what I am saying. If you welcome it, if you embrace it, if you abide in it. It's this continuing theme that John underscores as we said at the beginning. I'm writing these things so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and have life in his name. When you believe it, Jesus makes this audacious promise. When you believe what I have said, you will never see death.

Just think about that. If you will believe what Jesus says about himself, you'll never die. You'll never see death. Actually, it's stated as a double negative. You'll never by no means ever. You'll never by no means ever.

What kind of death is in view? It can't be physical death. Jesus died on the cross. It can't be physical death. All the apostles that followed him died. Everyone dies, right? One out of one dies. So, we always have to ask, well, what is the context? What are we talking about? When the Bible talks about death, it talks obviously about physical death. Separation of the body from the soul. But it also talks about spiritual death. Spiritual death is separation from God in time. We're born into the world in that condition, right? But then there's a third death, the second death or eternal death. And that's clearly what Jesus is talking about here. If you will keep my word, if you will believe what I say, you will never die. You will never ever by any means experience eternal separation from God. That's the promise that he makes.

Now, it causes me to ask the question, what is our theology of death? What is our theology of death? What is our understanding of death? Other than a topic that we may not want to talk about, may not want to think about. As believers, it's incumbent upon us that we have a clear understanding of the theology of Scripture regarding this matter of death, isn't it? This is hardly comprehensive, but I'd just offer five things. I think, first of all, our understanding of death from a biblical perspective as a believer in Christ is to say it underscores the fact that this life is not all that there is. This life is not all that there is. This life that we're living now is literally a life in preparation for the life to come. That's the way we need to be looking at life. We need to be looking at this life as a lifetime of preparation

for the life to come. As you look at a lot of people, the way they are living their life, you would be convinced that this life is all that there is. All their energy, all their focus, all their attention – what drives them is everything about this world and not the world to come. And yet, a biblical perspective would say to us, that's exactly wrong. We're living in preparation for the life to come.

Do you really believe and understand that the way you live your life now is going to be impactful for all of eternity? I believe that's exactly what the Bible teaches. We're impacting eternity by the way we live and conduct ourselves now, by our faithfulness now. We focus not on this world, but on the world to come. We're living in the land of the dying going to the land of the living. We're not living in the land of the living going to the land of the dying. It's the opposite of the world's perspective. Death for the believer truly isn't just a comma. It's just a comma. It's not a period. It certainly isn't an exclamation. It's just a comma.

We sometimes use the language of passing away. That's not my favorite. We're passing on, but we're not passing away because there's something much better that is awaiting us.

And then we need to understand death is the enemy. Death is the enemy. Death is not natural. Death is the enemy. Death is the intrusion of sin into the world. For by one man, sin has entered the world and death by sin. Therefore, death has passed upon all men for all have sinned, Paul says in Romans, right?

I understand and I appreciate when we have a memorial service, we will often call it the celebration of life. And it is a celebration of life. But we don't want to forget that amid that celebration of life, we're acknowledging something unnatural that has happened. We're acknowledging that sin is broken into the world that God had created, and it has brought something that he never intended or wanted. And so, it's not the natural thing, but it's unnatural. Oh, death, Paul says in 1 Corinthians, where is your sting? And of course, it is because of what Christ has done that it is not that for us.

And then, this is the most urgent matter that we can possibly deal with, isn't it? A proper theology of death is something that every one of us ought to give consideration to.

The question that we often refer to is, if you were to die today, do you know for sure you'd go to heaven? That just brings it right together.

If you've been at Covenant very long, you know I'll throw that question out on occasion. Years ago, there was a couple that attended. They moved away many years ago. And he told me later, because I don't know where he was spiritually, but he told me later that it always bugged him when I asked that question. He did not want me to ask that question. If you were to die today, do you know for sure you'd go to heaven? Part of the reason why he didn't like to hear that question is because he wasn't sure what the answer was.

But this is what Jesus is saying. If you keep my word, if you embrace my word, if you welcome my word, if you believe my word, you know without a doubt the answer to that question. If you die right now, you know you're going to heaven based on the greatest promise that Jesus can make, that he has given you forgiveness of sin and eternal life. And, you know, just to follow up in answering that, as to why is it that God should let you into heaven, there's only one answer to that. It is because I have believed what Jesus has said about himself and what he has said about me. And so here, I think Jesus gives us an incredible answer and an incredible promise.

Now, the second accusation and reply in verses 52 to 56. The accusation at 52 and 53. The Jews said to him, now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, as did the prophets. Yet you say, if anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death. Are you greater than our father Abraham who died? And the prophets died? Who do you make yourself out to be? So, this is it, isn't it? This is the accusation. When all else fails, attack the person. When you don't have truth, when you don't have ideas, what happens? We see this in our world all the time today. People don't want to debate ideas. They just want to personally attack somebody. And that's what they're doing here. Jesus, you're crazy. That's in effect what they're saying.

Once again, they're just focused on the physical. This is a repeated refrain in John's gospel. How he brings to us this perspective that if you don't have spiritual eyes to see, all you can see is physical stuff. That's what they're hung up on. In their mind, this is

confirmation of the first accusation – that he's demonized. Now he's crazy. After all, Abraham has died. All the prophets have died. Now this guy comes along and says, if you'll just keep his word, if you'll believe him, you'll never die. Well, that makes no sense. Because the greatest prophet of all, Abraham, died. Moses died. All the prophets of Israel died. How could this guy come along and say now, you don't have to die? That's a total absurdity to them.

Behind it, of course, is the question, who do you think you are? That's what they're in effect saying to Jesus. Jesus, who do you really think you are? Someone told me that in the 70s, there was a song called “Mr. Big Stuff”. And it was Mr. Big Stuff, who do you think you are? Now some of you are smiling because you remember that song. And that's what's happening here. Mr. Big Stuff, who do you think you are? That's what they're saying to Jesus. You think you're big stuff. Who do you think you are? You're calling into question the greatest prophets of Israel and saying that there's something deficient in them because they've died.

Well, of course, they miss the point completely, don't they? Because Jesus isn't talking about physical death. They completely miss the truth of what Jesus has said. If you keep my word. They, of course, thought that they were. If you had said to them, do you think you're keeping the word? The law? Of course, they would have thought they were. They were the keepers of the law. You will never taste death. Well, again, they're focused only on the physical. They're not seeing what Jesus is teaching.

Look at Jesus's response in verses 54 to 56. Here's the second thing he reveals. I am glorified by the Father. I'm glorified by the Father. In Jesus's reply, he, in effect, simply says to them, hey, why don't you check out my references? Check out my references. Look at verse 54. Jesus answered, if I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say he is our God. But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him and keep his word. You read those verses and you want to say, Jesus, what do you really think about these guys? Right? What do you really think? When he says, if I were to say to you in verse 55 that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him and I keep his word.

When we want to get a job or when we need references, right? We find people in our life who know us and who generally like us, right? And we want them to give us references. Well, that's in effect what is happening here. Jesus is offering up references for who he is. But on Jesus' application form under references, he only has one and it is God the Father. And that's probably all he needs, right? Here is my reference form. Here is one who will vouch for me. Jonathan read it earlier, Philippians chapter 2. He has given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that he is Lord, that he's Christ, that he's everything that God has promised for us. And so here is this wonderful, wonderful reminder that the references that Jesus gives are those from the Father himself.

Then we have another amazing statement in verse 56. Look at verse 56. Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad. Now, again, that's just an amazing statement. Abraham is their guy. Moses is their guy. But they're nothing like Abraham. They're nothing like Moses. When you look at verse 56, what question do you have? Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day and he saw it and was glad. What do you want to ask at that point? Don't you want to ask when in Abraham's life did he see Jesus' day and rejoice? And you know what the answer is? We don't know. We don't know, but that won't keep us from trying, right? We don't know exactly what Jesus is referring to.

But there was some circumstance in Abraham's life that Jesus says, Abraham looked forward into time, and he saw the coming Messiah and he rejoiced in the promise that God had made. Now, what could be some possible considerations? Well, some have suggested, I think this is the least likely of all, that Abraham being in heaven now is seeing Christ on the earth, the Messiah. But that doesn't really fit the description of looking forward, does it? That would be Jesus in this present moment.

Could it possibly be that when the three visitors came to see Abraham, one of them was the pre-incarnate Christ? Is it possible that in that encounter there was some vision, some understanding that Abraham had that this was in fact the Messiah? The text doesn't tell us that. Could it be that when the angel appeared and promised Abraham that he

would have a son, Isaac? He's almost 100 years old and he has no sons by which to carry on this great promise that God has given. So maybe when that angel appeared, Abraham, we know, believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. Maybe that was the day he looked for. Or maybe, many people think it's Genesis 22, when he offers Isaac on Mount Moriah in obedience when God says, take your son, your only son Isaac. You get the imagery. You get the picture. Take your son, your only son Isaac, just as I'm going to send my Son, my only Son and offer him on the cross. In one of those circumstances, Abraham looks forward to see the day when Christ would come.

But here's the point. The Jews point to Abraham for salvation. Get this, Abraham is pointing to Jesus for salvation. They miss it. They miss it. Abraham is pointing to Jesus and they're pointing to Abraham. Jesus, now you've done it. You've gone too far.

Here's the third accusation. Verses 57 and 58, the accusation in verse 57. So, the Jews said to him, you are not 50 years old. And have you seen Abraham? There's the accusation. They're hung up on birthdays. Jesus is about 33 years old. They've done the math. They're literalists to a fault. But here's Jesus. I don't know if they don't know how old he is or if they're just rounding up the number. You know, he's, you can't be more than 50. So, we'll just say you're 50. Some people suggested that 50 was the peak of ministry. So, they took 50. I don't know if that gives you some pause, doesn't it? But in any event, why did they say that? We don't know necessarily why they picked that number. But the point of it is, this is once again, them completely missing what Jesus is trying to teach them.

Jesus did not say that he saw Abraham. He said that Abraham saw him. Abraham saw him. And so verse 58, you come to his reply, and it's really the apex now of the whole chapter. Look at this. Jesus said to them, truly, truly, amen, amen. Pay attention, pay attention, right? I say to you, before Abraham was, I am. And the revelation that he gives of himself is without question. Jesus is saying in that verse, I am God. They're into birthdays. They're counting days. Jesus is into theology. And he's basically saying to them, I'm just getting ready to blow your mind, all right? That's what's happening in verse 57. Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.

There was a time when Abraham was not. There was a time when Abraham's parents were not. There was a time when Abraham's great-grandparents were not. You can just go down the lineage, right? There was a time when they did not exist. Jesus, in fact, says that is not true of me. I am the pre-existent one. I am the self-existent one. I'm the co-existent one. In fact, Jesus does not say, before Abraham was, I was. He does not say, before Abraham was, I was. Why doesn't he say that? Because that would lock in a time reference. It wasn't before Abraham was, I was. Before Abraham was what? I am. I am. I am the self-existent one. I am the co-existent one. I am the one who is God, very God of very God. So, I am. *Ego eimi*. There's no predicate. I am. That's a declaration of deity.

When your friends come knocking on your door and they tell you they're a Jehovah Witness, if you can get it out of them. Or they tell you they're a Mormon, they're perfectly comfortable with Jesus being I was. Before Abraham was, I was. But that's not what Jesus says. Jesus says, before Abraham was, I am. Because they believe that before Abraham was, there was a time when Jesus didn't exist either. They believe that he is a created being. Well, that's not what the Bible teaches at all. The Bible teaches that Jesus is the very Son of God. I am. *Ego eimi*.

The religious leaders, they're not confused at all. They're not confused at all. Look at verse 59. They picked up stones. So, they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple. They know their Old Testament Scripture. They know Leviticus 24:16. Whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death. And Jesus just blasphemed in their mind the name of the Lord by claiming to be God himself. So, they understood exactly at this point what his claim was.

When it says Jesus hid himself, it literally says, but Jesus was hidden from them. So, it was not the Father's time. Remember, we've seen that phrase, was not the Father's time yet for Jesus to come to the cross.

So, what do we take away? This is the whole encounter between Jesus and these religious leaders. The most loving thing we can do for anyone is to tell them the truth about Jesus. To tell them the truth about sin. To tell them the truth about judgment to come. In other words, the most loving thing we can do in any encounter we have with people in

which God opens the door for spiritual conversation is to share with them the gospel. And that gospel is bad news and it is good news. The bad news is that all of us have sinned and sin brings death and separation from God. But there's also good news. The good news is Jesus came and He died on a cross in payment for my sin. And all I have to do is believe that what He did was enough. And God gives me the gift of eternal life. I don't ever have to wonder what is the answer to the question: if I die today, do I know for sure I'll go to heaven? Don't leave here this morning without the certainty that if you were to die today, that you would go to heaven. Because it isn't based on anything that you can do for God, it's based on everything that He's done for you. And He's done everything that needs to be done. And all He asks is that you and I believe.

Let's pray. Father God, call to yourself those right now in these closing moments, Lord, that need to know the answer to the question, what comes after death? For those of us who believe You and believe what You have done through Christ, Your Son, it is that we have the gift of eternal life. And right now we possess that eternal life. Lord, thank You for that. I pray that Your Spirit would give understanding, open eyes, and give belief. Lord, encourage us in this new year to be bold in our witness for Christ. We love You and we thank You in Jesus' name, amen.