

**-S- Title:** We Are the Sermon

**Theme:** You might be the only sermon some people will ever "hear."

**Scripture:** **-S-** "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. (John 14:15-17)

**-S-** A long, long, long time ago - when I was a boy the movie theaters often had a Saturday afternoon movie for children. Each week we would go to the theater and watch a great movie. Some of the more popular ones were the cowboy movies starring the great cowboys like Roy Rogers. **-S-** (Show the picture of Roy Rogers.) Sometimes, right at the moment when the hero was in a very dangerous situation and it looked like he was a "goner" for sure, the movie would suddenly stop and on the screen flashed the words, **-S-** "*To be continued....*" Oh no! Now we would have to wait until the next Saturday to find out how the hero was going to get out of this mess. The next Saturday, the movie would review what had happened the week before, so that if someone had missed it, they would understand what was going on.

This week's Bible lesson is a bit like one of those Saturday movies. In case some of you missed what came before our scripture this morning, let me explain what happened. Jesus was trying to comfort his disciples. He knew that He would soon return to heaven and His disciples would be left alone. "Don't worry" He told them, "I am going to prepare a place for you, but I will come again, and when I do, you will come and be with me." The disciples didn't fully understand, but Jesus

continues, knowing that they would be safe and comforted by His telling them ...

**S-** "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever." The helper that Jesus was talking about is the Holy Spirit. **-S-** Jesus asked the Father and He sent the Holy Spirit to live in us and help us to follow Jesus and obey His teachings.

You know, when we try to explain how the Holy Spirit leads us day by day, most people can't understand it. Jesus said, "The world cannot receive, because it does not see Him" Do you know what they can see? They can see how you and I treat other people. **-S-** They see when we are generous, loving, caring, helpful, and kind. I have heard it said, **-S-** "You might be the only sermon some people will ever hear." That is what you and I need to remember, we are the sermon, the only sermon some people may ever hear.

What did Jesus tell us to do? He said, **-S-** "Love one another as I have loved you." Then Jesus asked the Father to send the Holy Spirit to help us. When others see how knowing Jesus has changed the way we treat other people, then they will want to know Him too.

**-S-** Father, as the Holy Spirit leads us day by day, help us to follow and to obey. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**-S-** John 8:18-27

Sermon #52

**-S-** **Three Questions****PRAYER**

To fully understand our study passage this morning we need to remember that the relationship between Jesus and the Jewish leadership has been deteriorating since chapter 5. The Apostle John records that this deterioration began with the Jewish leader's opposition to Jesus' healing on the Sabbath and by chapter 8 the break is complete and they want Jesus dead. John will take us from this sad breakdown and desire for violence against God in the flesh and he will shift to the new theme of those who God has given to Jesus and their saving relationship with Him. However, at this point in chapter 8 the Apostle John is still recording the deteriorating relationship and that it reaches a terrible low point for the Jewish leaders and all those who do not believe in Jesus as the Messiah or the Christ or as the Son of God.

The animosity was already bad, the Jewish leaders tried to arrest Jesus at the end of chapter 7, but that failed. Then they prearranged a horrible act of sin in order to have witnesses to try to trap Jesus with the judgment of the adulterous woman and again they failed. Last week we dealt with the Jewish leaders trying to discredit Jesus and dismiss His testimony on a legal technicality. Jesus had an answer for their accusations, as He always does, for He is God and they are just men. Frustrated by their failures the Jewish leaders sink to a new low by attacking Jesus personally and in doing so they attempt to impugn His origin and character. Their approach was to ask Him insulting questions. They asked three questions of Jesus. Please turn in your bibles to John, chapter 8 and verse 18.

## **-S-** First Question

The Jewish leaders first question was in response to what Jesus had said in verse 18, **-S-** “I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me.” Jesus was stating that God was a witness and testified as to who Jesus was and is, meeting the legal requirement of having two or more witnesses. These Jewish leaders respond in verse 19, **-S-** “Where is Your Father?” (John 8:19) Not only is this question meant to deny that there is any unique relationship between Jesus and God, but also to raise, for these men, the questionable circumstances surrounding Jesus’ birth. They believed Joseph was Jesus’ real father, not God. But, then, for these leaders this is also questionable since Mary was found with child prior to her marriage. So, for these leaders Jesus could not have a relationship with God for He is unholy - for he was a bastard child. This is clear by what we read later in this exchange with the Jewish leaders, for Jesus tells them, **-S-** “You are doing the deeds of your father.” Here Jesus is saying that the father of these Jewish leaders is the Prince of the earth, the evil one, not God the Father in heaven. These leaders then reply to Jesus, **-S-** “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God.” (John 8:41) They are implying Jesus was conceived in sin and they were not. Jesus answers their maligning His character by saying, **-S-** “You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also.” (John 8:19) These men may have been leaders both politically and religiously, but their faith was in their lineage from Abraham and their salvation by their own efforts. The result was that they were the ones that had no true relationship with God.

Our passage is a dialog of questions by the Jewish leaders and answers by Jesus, but the Apostle John disrupts this and wedges into to this dialog the location of

Jesus and the inability of these leaders to act against Jesus, the Son of God. Verse 20 reads, **-S-** “These words He (Jesus) spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.” The treasury was located in the Court of Women along both sides. Jesus was teaching in the temple, which was His custom. The Jewish leaders had no success in their plots for Jesus’ hour had not yet come. The Apostle John now moves us along this dialog with Jesus making another statement and the Jewish leaders questioning of this statement.

### **-S-** Second Question

The Jewish leaders second question is in response to what Jesus said in verse 21, **-S-** “I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come.” Because of their lack of understand of spiritual things these Jewish leaders respond to Jesus saying, **-S-** “Surely He will not kill Himself, will He?” In Jewish belief those who killed themselves went not only to **-S-** *Hadēs*, but also to the very lowest level of *Hadēs*. In truth, these Jewish leaders had it backwards; they could not follow Jesus because He was going to heaven to be with His Father and these Jews will descend into *Hadēs* and then **Hell** for they will be judged by a holy and righteous God. They lack a relationship with God because they do not have faith in Jesus as the Son of God who reconciles people back to God the Father.

Let me take a moment to make sure we all understand there is a difference between *hadēs* and **hell**. The Greek term **-S-** *hadēs* means “the place of the unseen.” It designates the invisible world of the dead, as does the Hebrew word *sheol*. Originally the Greeks thought that being in *hadēs* was a shadowy, ghostlike

existence that happened to all who died, good and evil alike. Gradually, they and the Romans came to think of *hadēs* as a place of reward and punishment, much like the Catholic concept of Purgatory. *Hadēs* became important to the Jews as it was the typical term used by the translators of the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament) to render the Hebrew name *sheol* into Greek. This translation of *hadēs* for the Hebrew word *sheol* worked well because both words can signify the “physical grave” or “death” as found in Genesis 37:35; Proverbs 5:5 and, -S- “Her house is the way to Sheol, descending to the chambers of death.” (Proverbs 7:27) Both *hades* and *sheol* originally referred to a dark underworld, -S- “Before I go—and I shall not return—to the land of darkness and deep shadow, the land of utter gloom as darkness *itself*, of deep shadow without order, and which shines as the darkness.” (Job 10:21–22) In Jewish literature, *hadēs* or *sheol* is the place of torment for the wicked, while the righteous enter Paradise. -S- “Short and sorrowful is our life, and there is no remedy when a life comes to its end, and no one has been known to return from Hades.” -S- “But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them.” (*Wisdom of Solomon 2:1; 3:1 – literature, not scripture*)

-S- By the beginning of the New Testament period, *hadēs* had three common meanings: -S- (1) death, -S- (2) the place of all the dead, and -S- (3) the place of the wicked dead only. Context determines which meaning an author intends in a given passage. In Matthew 11:23 and Luke 10:15, Jesus speaks of the descending of Capernaum to *hadēs*. He simply means that the city will be destroyed. In Acts 2:27, which is quoting Psalm 16:10, -S- “For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.” Here *hadēs* is referred to as the place of the dead. Christ did not stay among the dead in -S-

*hadēs*; He rose from the dead as found in Acts 2:27. **-S-** In Revelation 20:13–14, *hadēs* refers to the place of the dead, because *hadēs* is emptied of all who are in it at the end of the world. When the wicked are judged and cast into the lake of fire or Hell, *hadēs* is also thrown in the lake of fire. **-S-** Luke 16:23, however, clearly refers to *hadēs* as the place of the wicked dead. There, the rich man is tormented in flames, while the poor man Lazarus goes to Paradise.

Unfortunately, the word *hadēs* was often translated as “hell” in the King James Version causing some confusion. But there is a different Greek word for “hell”; it is “*gehenna*” as Jesus makes clear when He says, **-S-** “If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell (*gehenna*), into the unquenchable fire ... **-S-** If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than, having your two feet, to be cast into hell (*gehenna*).” (Mark 9:43 and 45)

Understanding this enables us to move onto the Jewish leaders third and final question.

### **-S-** Third Question

Jesus tries to straighten out their misconception of where He is going and where they are going by telling these Jews, **-S-** “You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins.”

(John 8:23-24) They respond to Jesus saying, **-S-** “Who are You?” They are in essence saying to Jesus that He is deluded; Jesus may think He is special, but He is really nobody of any consequence and He comes from the unimportant region of Galilee. Jesus tells these leaders that He has been explaining who He is and they are not listening because they are not alive spiritually and they **-S-** “will die in

**your (their) sins.”** It cannot be any clearer and more to the point than this – without faith in Jesus **“you will die in your sins.”**

## **-S-** God Gave Them Over

These men despite their positions as spiritual leaders and their knowledge of the Old Testament do not know God. It is out of fear they ask these mean spirited questions of Jesus. Today it is the same. Many intellectual and learned people deal with their fear of being held accountable to God by asking scornful questions in an attempt to not have to deal with God or His children the true believers in Jesus and His ambassadors here on earth. Not all questions are for the purpose of gaining knowledge and understanding. Some questions are an effort to avoid the truth as we have seen in this passage of scripture. Another example of avoiding the truth is found in how Paul address the people in Rome, **-S-** **“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”** (Romans 1:20) Because people do not like what they know about God, they do not want to recognize the truth of what they know about God. Because of their sin they refuse to retain the knowledge of God and therefore, willfully reject Him. In response to their effort to not recognize the truth of God, Paul uses this terrible phrase, **-S-** **“God gave them over.”** Paul uses this phrase 3 times in 5 verses showing its importance. **-S-** **“Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.”** (Romans 1:24) Here God gives people over to their uncleanness, this is a reference to sexual sins that destroy people from within. **-S-** **“For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions ...”** (Romans 1:26) Here Paul tells us that because people exchanged the truth of God for a lie and



they worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, God gives them over to their vile affections of sexual perversions; referring to homosexuality, lesbianism and all forms of perverted sex. Because of their willful sinful behavior they do not want to retain the knowledge of God. So Paul continues in verse 28, **S-** “Just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, **God gave them over** to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper.” God then abandons these people to live with their own corrupt minds – they have rejected God and now live without Him. This is the most horrible of fates.

### **-S-** The Day of God’s Grace

In verse 21 Jesus says, **-S-** “Where I am going, you cannot come.” Here Jesus is making reference to His own death and resurrection. These leaders are not seeking Jesus while He is among them and they will not seek after Him once He is resurrected. Jesus will die and then rise again and those who believe in Jesus will rise also to live with God for eternity. But these Jewish men will die and be separated from God for all eternity. This teaches that there is no guarantee of tomorrow and we must seek Christ while we may find Him – this is the Day of God’s Grace - to delay is the ultimate folly.

People exercise **-S-** **common-sense** and prepare for most aspects of life: they work to gain educations that will help them have careers to support themselves and their families, they set aside money for their retirement; they pay for health insurance and take care of themselves physically to enable themselves to live longer and healthier lives; they take vacations and have times of rest to reduce stress; they do so many common-sense things and yet – they will not prepare to meet God and let me be clear, all people will meet God. Unless our case is settled

out-of-court by our personal response by believing in Jesus and accepting Him as Savior - enabling Jesus to represent and defend us before God the Father – then we are left to defend ourselves before a just and righteous God and His judgment will be to reject those people who have not accepted Jesus as their Savior – they will be judged for their sins and for rejecting His Son. For God says clearly, **-S-** “AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU.” **-S-** Behold, now is “THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,” behold, now is “THE DAY OF SALVATION” (2 Corinthians 6:2) Today is the Day of God’s Grace – you must act now.

### **-S-** There is No Excuse

Jesus’ response in verses 21 and 24 is clear that unbelievers **-S-** “will die in your sins.” This is a truth the world does not want to hear. The world believes if they are loud enough and busy enough they can drown out the truth of God.

However, there are only two ways to die according to scripture. A person may die **-S-** “in the Lord” according to Revelation 14:13 or one may die **-S-** “in their sin” as we find in Romans, **-S-** “For the wages of sin is death.” **Who can give me the chapter and verse?** **-S-** (Romans 6:23) **-S-** Physical death is the separation of the soul and spirit from the body. **-S-** Spiritual death is the separation of the soul and spirit from God. To die in sin without the blessing of Christ is to be separated from God forever.

### **-S-** Separation from God

Jesus said that if people refuse to believe in Him and continue to refuse Him and therefore die in their sins they would go to hell and not heaven. Jesus said to these Jewish leaders, **-S-** “You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins;

for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins.” (John 8:23-24) So Jesus was among the people, but where was He going? Jesus said, **-S-** “Where I am going, you cannot come.” These men believed the opposite of the truth – it wasn’t Jesus going to hell, but they were. They might be able to convince themselves that they were saved by their own efforts while they lived mortal lives, but the truth is that they could not escape coming before a holy God and His judgment. This is evident by what John wrote in verse 27, “They did not realize that (*Jesus*) He had been speaking to them about (*God*) the Father.”

When these men asked, **-S-** “Surely He will not kill Himself, will He?” The answer was “Yes.” In the sense that He gave His life that we may live with God forever. When these men said, **-S-** “Who are You?” they did not know the answer – the question is, “Do you know who Jesus is?” Do you believe in Jesus as the Christ? There is no more important question one could ask.