

CROSSROADS CHRISTIAN CHURCH

PREACHING TEAM

SERMON MANUSCRIPT – final draft

(6/7/20)

JOHN 8:31-59

JESUS IS FREEDOM!

CROSSROADS ONLINE MESSAGE

BY

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THESIS STATEMENT: Jesus is freedom! Through Jesus we can be free from sin, lies, and death.

Text: John 8:31-59

Hello everyone. Thank you for joining us today online – whether you are watching in your home, with your family, with your small group, or with neighbors. We pray you are enjoying community.

If I am not a familiar face to you, my name is **Matt Volkman**. My wife Julie and I have attended Crossroads for 25 years. I am currently serving as our West Campus Lead – a volunteer role for me. I serve on our Lead Team at Crossroads. I lead our staff on our West Campus. I have preached around once a month since last summer, mostly at the West Campus. I served for 15 years as an elder. I stepped down as Elder Chairman last summer as we transitioned the role to Brian Gower. I love our church. This is a special place for my family and me!

It has been a joy to see God at work among our Elders and Lead Team. This has been a challenging season for us as leaders. But God has been SO faithful! We thank you for your patience and walking along side us.

We are SO excited to get back onto our campuses for services next weekend. We will regather at both our Newburgh and West Campuses for services on Sunday, June 21st. Services at Newburgh are on Sunday at 9:00 am, 11:00 am, and 5:30 pm. Services at West are at 9:00 am and 11:00 am. Please RSVP for the service you are planning on attending on our website. Remember, we will have limited seating due to the social distancing requirements. We will NOT have children's programming on either campus according to the Governor's directive. If you are not planning on attending one of campuses live, please continue to join us online as we have

worshipped for the last several months. May God bless our church family as we take this step of faith!

There could be no better way to end this series . . . This is the ninth sermon from our series – Jesus is _____. We close with **JESUS IS FREEDOM!** We will learn how to have freedom from SIN, freedom from LIES, and freedom from DEATH.

If you are like me, you have not felt very FREE over the last several months. The pandemic has been a challenge for all of us. I have not had the freedom to hug my Dad for three months. I went two months working out of my son, Austin’s apartment downtown . . . that was a lot worse for him than me! In our community, we have been limited in terms of big gatherings.

More recently - over the last several weeks, we have seen **social unrest arise** across our country. Many in our community and across the nation have been **bound by the prejudices of others**. We want you to know – this is **not** okay. Jesus did not die on the cross for only people of certain ethnicity or certain skin color. He died so that ALL could have FREEDOM through him. I don’t know about you, but FREEDOM has a different meaning to me TODAY than it did a few months ago. In this message, we will learn that **TRUE freedom is found in Jesus Christ!**

I mentioned earlier that Jesus offers us freedom from LIES. I look forward to diving into that point with you in just a minute. Before we do, we thought it would be fun to play an interactive game. Do you know the GAME – TWO TRUTHS and a LIE? I remember playing this as a kid. Three statements are made – two are TRUE and one is NOT. YOU have to guess which statement is the LIE. Satan plays this game with us all the time . . . Sometimes the game HE PLAYS impacts our destiny.

Right now, we are going to be a little more **lighthearted**. If you are watching live in a watch party, or at one of our service times share in the chat or comment section **which of these**

three statements is a LIE . . . We are going to put them on the screen. Feel free to discuss if you are meeting with a group as well. These statements each pertain to a member of our Lead Team .

. . We will give you 60 SECONDS.

- 1. Our Lead Pastor, Phil Heller's favorite college basketball team is the Kentucky Wildcats.**
- 2. Our Family Ministry Pastor, Andrew Bondurant's son is named Adam.**
- 3. Our Online Campus Lead, Andy Teare has been a member of both a punk band and a rap group.**

OK – what do you think? Which is the LIE? It is actually the second one – Andrew Bondurant's son is NOT named **Adam**. Bondo's son is **ABE**. He is a cute little dude . . . must get his looks from his mother, Bre!

Alright, let's get to our text. We have a lot to cover. Please get your Bibles or Bible aps handy. Get out your journal. We are going to walk through the passage together verse by verse – Our text is **John 8:31-59**.

As we pick up the story, Jesus is teaching at a Jewish festival in Jerusalem. The Jewish leaders are questioning him. They are divided over who he is. Many Jews there dispute his testimony. Jesus is speaking to a mixture of people – some believe in him, some do not believe, and some do not know what to believe! It sounds like our culture today, doesn't it?

In **verses 31-41** we learn – **We have freedom from SIN through the truth of Jesus.** Jesus says you are **held captive** to your own sin unless you believe in the truth of Jesus. Do you feel **constrained** by a specific sin in your life? Are you having trouble breaking free? Have you considered the truth of Jesus' words? **Jesus is freedom!**

(John 8:31-33) “31 To the Jews who had believed in him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching (other translations say – continue in my word or abide in my word) *you are really my disciples.*” We will find out shortly that these are NOT true believers or true disciples that Jesus is speaking to!

We are reminded of Jesus’ teaching from **Matthew 7** with the **Wise and Foolish Builders**. The WISE MAN built his house on the rock. The house withstood the storms, while the FOOLISH MAN built his house on the sand . . . it all came crashing down! **True disciples** build their foundation on the ROCK. Jesus Christ is that ROCK!

Jesus says “32 *Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free* (or make you free)” Our minds immediately recall a political campaign or a slogan for an academic institution when we hear this verse. Jesus is talking about freedom from SIN, not political or academic freedom!

The Jews think Jesus is referring to political freedom. “33 *They answered him, ‘We are Abraham’s descendants (or offspring) and have never been slaves to anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?’*” What? Really? The Old Testament tells of their bondage to the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and Syrians. Plus, in the days of Jesus they were suppressed by the Romans. They are in denial!

The Apostle Paul writes about this as well in **Galatians 5:1**. “1 *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*”

Let’s pause for a moment here - John and Paul use the words “**slaves**” and “**slavery**” in these verses. This imagery may seem a little raw, a little disturbing – I know it is to me! **Racial tension** is not unique to our culture. It existed in Old Testament times and in the days of Jesus as

well . . . Jesus continually stressed **our** spiritual heritage as **God's children** as something available to ALL PEOPLE. Why? Because God loves the entire world - God desires ALL PEOPLE to follow his Son, Jesus!

(John 8:34-36) *“34 Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, (or “truly, truly” what scholars call the “double amen.” This is the first of **three** in this passage) everyone who sins is a slave to sin. 35 Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”*

Paul refers to believers as children in **Romans 8:17** *“17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.”* While **those in servitude** often lived with the family, they could be sold or released. A true son had rights – he received an inheritance.

(John 8:37-40) Jesus goes on *“37 I know that you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are looking for a way to kill me, because you have no room for my word (or no place for my word). Jesus knows they are NOT true, believing Jews because they are trying to kill him! 38 I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you are doing what you have heard from your father.”* So, who is Jesus referring to as their father? Stay tuned! *“39 Abraham is our father,” they answered. ‘If you were Abraham's children,’ said Jesus, ‘then you would do what Abraham did. 40 As it is, you are looking for a way to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things.”* Jesus alludes to TRUTH – he is referring to the entirety of his teaching. He hears from God. This had to bristle the Jews a little!

(John 8:41) *“41a You are doing the works of your own father.’ ‘We are not illegitimate children,’ they protested. They say, “We are not born out of sexual immorality or born of fornication.”* This is probably a reference to questions surrounding the virgin birth of Jesus. This

could be a **not so subtle** SLAP against Jesus. “*41b The only Father we have is God himself.*” They want Jesus to know “if you hear from God, we do too! He is our Father too!”

We can sense the CONFLICT is rising as we move to the next section of Scripture.

In verses 42-47 we learn – **We have freedom from LIES through belonging to God’s family.** The devil or Satan is the father of lies – he tries to convince YOU of things about yourself which are NOT true. If you belong to God’s family, it is HIS voice you hear . . . not the voice of Satan! What lie has the devil convinced you of that you need freedom from? Do you feel entrapped by this lie? Would you like to be a part of God’s family? **Jesus is freedom!**

(John 8:42-43) We pick up in verse 42. “*42 Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me.’*” True children of God would love his SON. Jesus is emphasizing his unbreakable, **umbilical cord** connection with God, his Father. Jesus is the SENT ONE – sent to save us from **sin, lies, and death!**

“*43 Why is my language not clear to you? (or in other words - why don’t you understand me?) Because you are unable to hear what I say.*” It seems Jesus could be speaking directly to the Jewish leaders now. Throughout the gospel accounts we see they do NOT understand. Their hearts are hardened.

(John 8:44) Finally, Jesus reveals their true ancestry. They are not from God, rather they are from the **devil!** Jesus says, “*44a You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires.*” Wow – Jesus is coming at them! As my kids would say – Jesus is coming at their top!

Jesus describes their father, the **devil.** “*44b He was a murderer from the beginning* (Jesus is probably referring to the FALL of Adam and Eve in **Genesis 3**. It was there where through

temptation, Satan brought death to humankind). Jesus continues **the devil was a murderer** “*not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language (or speaks out of his own character), for he is a liar and the father of lies.*” Let’s face it friends - Satan hates the truth! Since the Jews are not accepting the TRUTH from Jesus and trying to kill him . . . they are doing the will of the devil, NOT Abraham, NOT God. Satan has deceived the Jews. Unfortunately, he can deceive you and me too . . .

(John 8:45-46) Jesus says, “*45 Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! 46 Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me?* The Jews consider him a SINNER! Jesus says, “Which of you convicts me of sin? I have not sinned. I am holy and perfect! Sin is not a part of MY nature! I do not LIE like your father, the devil!”

(John 8:47) Then Jesus describes how to **suppress the lies** and **how to gain freedom** from the lies of Satan – you listen to God and become a part of HIS family! In **verse 47**, Jesus says, “*Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.*” This can be hard teaching – NOT everyone is a part of God’s family. SURE – everyone is given the opportunity . . . BUT not all accept. The theology of **universalism**, the belief that all humankind will eventually be saved - is simply a LIE from Satan! You must **belong** to God to be saved!

Famous Bible commentator **J. Vernon McGee** claims, “**The universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man has brought us into a lot of trouble. The Bible does not teach the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man.**”

Jesus says that we are to listen to HIM. We are reminded of **John 10** where the sheep hear the voice of the gatekeeper or the shepherd. The sheep follow because they know his voice. Jesus

says in **John 10:11** *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”* The TRUTH of Jesus should drown out the LIES of Satan in our lives!

Now I want to ask you . . . “What lies from the devil are you believing?” We are going to put a graphic up on the screen for you. This will help with this exercise. Put “LIES” on the left-hand column and “TRUTH” on the right-hand column. You can use your journal or a sheet of paper. Please take some time now and throughout the week to ask the Lord to reveal to you what lies you might be believing about yourself. Then, look up in your Bible or a Bible app . . . or simply google what the TRUTH of Scripture says in opposition to that LIE. I encourage you to share this with your family, friends, and small group. For instance, you may believe you are “unloved” or “forgotten” . . . my friends, Scripture disagrees!! **Please take 90 SECONDS and do this now . . .**

That is a great exercise. I pray it helps you **live and love like Jesus!**

In verses **48-59** we learn – **We have freedom from DEATH through the identity of Jesus.** The Jews put some serious heat on Jesus! Jesus claims he is the Son of God . . . he is deity. He says those who obey his word will never see death! Let me ask you - Do you fear death? Do you have faith that you are going to heaven when you die? Do you truly believe Jesus is who he says he is? **Jesus is freedom!**

(John 8:48) *“48 The Jews answered him, “Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?”* (or literally - you have a demon). These are two serious charges by the Jews. Jews hated Samaritans. This is the only time in Scripture where Jesus is accused of being a Samaritan. On other hand, the Jews claim several times that Jesus has a demon due to mainly to his miracle working.

(John 8:49-50) “*49 I am not possessed by a demon.’ said Jesus, ‘but I honor my Father and you dishonor me.’* Jesus lived in a shame and honor culture. By disrespecting Jesus, they were disrespecting God the Father! “*50 I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge.*” Jesus shows his humility - His testimony is from the Father. His glory is from the Father. His approval is from the Father. His Father’s opinion of him is all that matters.

(John 8:51) Jesus lays down a bold statement “*51 Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death.*” John connects obedience to faith with this claim from the mouth of Jesus. Jesus is referring to the gift of eternal life! Jesus powerfully says, “Obey and live!”

(John 8:52-53) “*52 At this they exclaimed, ‘Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death.’*” The Jews miss the point. They are clearly referring to physical death, not the spiritual death of a person. They revere Abraham and the prophets. “*53a Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets.*” We are reminded of how the Samaritan woman asks Jesus in **John 4:12**, “*Are you greater than our father Jacob?*” Like the Samaritan woman, the Jews are expecting a “No! I am not!” But . . . this is not the answer they are going to get. Then they ask Jesus, “*53b Who do you think you are?*” Better translations are probably: “Who do you pretend to be? Or, “Who do you claim to be?” They are lobbing in a softball for Jesus. He is about to knock it out of the park!

(John 8:54-56) “*54 Jesus replied if I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. 55 Though you do not know him I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I know him and obey his word.*” Jesus says, “Not only is your father a liar, but YOU are liars too!” True believers know God and obey

God. In **verse 56**, Jesus says “*56 Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.*” Scholars have a lot to say here. This could be an allusion to Abraham rejoicing over the birth of **Isaac** in **Genesis 17:17**, the onset of the promise that through Abraham all nations would be blessed. “My day” could refer to the Day of the Lord, the end times when Christ comes in glory. Also, Jewish tradition held that Abraham could see into the future. So, a lot is packed into **verse 56**.

(John 8:57-58) The Jews respond to Jesus, “*57 You are not yet fifty years old, they said to him, and you have seen Abraham!*” We know from **Luke 3:23** that Jesus was in his **early 30’s** when this event occurred. This could be a reference by the Jews - that Jesus had not yet reached what they called the **Age of Jubilee**, or his first Jubilee – 50 years old. I can relate – I just turned 51 last Sunday. This age held significance for the Jews.

Now Jesus has a **mic drop moment**. I believe THIS is the climax of the passage. “*58 Very truly I tell you, Jesus answered, before Abraham was born, I am.*” A better rendering is probably, “Before Abraham WAS, I am!” Jesus does NOT say “Before Abraham was, I WAS . . . but he says *I AM!*” Jesus is present. Jesus is eternal. Jesus is preexistent. We think of **John 1:1-2**, “*1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning.*”

This is also a clear reference to **Exodus 3:14** where God tells Moses at the burning bush “*14 I AM WHO I AM.*” The Jews knew he was referring to the Jewish Yahweh - God himself! Jesus claims equality to GOD!

(John 8:59) Now we close out the passage, “*59 At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.*” The Jews believe he has

committed **blasphemy** thus they attempt to stone him, the appropriate Old Testament penalty for this sin . . . It was not Jesus' appointed time, so he escapes unharmed.

Kenneth Barker writes in the NIV Study Bible, **“When Jesus declares “I AM” there are only two possible responses: to reach for a rock or to fall at his feet. Unfortunately, his enemies chose the former.”** So, I ask you – Which will YOU choose? (extended pause . . .)

JESUS IS FREEDOM!

- 1. We can have freedom from SIN through the truth of Jesus.**
- 2. We can have freedom from LIES through belonging to God's family.**
- 3. We can have freedom from DEATH through the identity of Jesus.**

This has been a great series church family – Jesus is _____. Let's put each of these sermon titles for the last nine weeks up on the screen.

- 1. Jesus is LIFE!**
- 2. Jesus is PROVIDER!**
- 3. Jesus is PRESENT!**
- 4. Jesus is ENOUGH!**
- 5. Jesus is the ONLY WAY!**
- 6. Jesus is LIFE GIVING!**
- 7. Jesus is FULL OF GRACE!**
- 8. Jesus is THE LIGHT!**
- 9. Jesus is FREEDOM!**

I want to give you an opportunity to reflect on our **entire sermon series** as I close us in prayer. You can write in your journal if you like. After the last nine weeks – **Who is Jesus to you NOW? What part of Jesus' identity resonates most with you? How is this identity of**

Jesus helping you live and love like him? We will leave this up on the screen as I close in prayer.

Let's pray . . . (pray through each of the nine identities of Jesus. Pray for God to reveal himself to us.)