**Promises Never Misspoken**

Based on John [8:48-59](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn8.48)

Preached on March 24, 2021

Lenten Midweek 3

Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

In today’s reading, Jesus is being persecuted for comparing himself to Abraham. He teaches, “**Truly, truly I say to you, if anyone keeps my word he will never see death**.” Of course, Jesus means they will never see ***everlasting death or hell***, but the Jews think he means physical death and they run with it. They says, “**Now we know you are wrong, because Abraham died and we all know he is from God.**” It’s a good argument. Abraham kept God’s word and yet he did die physical death. But what Jesus is saying is that, even though Abraham died a physical death, Abraham lives eternally with God, and that he will be raised up on the last day, because Abraham kept Jesus’ word.

Listen to Hebrews 11:17-19: “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” ***He considered that God was able even to raise [his son, Isaac] from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back***.”

It’s like this. Imagine you’re talking with someone after church, and they tell you they’re going to vacation in Europe next weekend. As the conversation comes to a close they say, “Okay, we’ll see you next Sunday” meaning of course, at church. There are two possibilities. The first is extremely unlikely...that they are going to vacation in Europe Friday and Saturday, catch a plane and make it back for Sunday morning service. I know all of you fairly well, and I know of your piety and sincere desire to attend weekly Divine Service...but I still have to say it’s unlikely you would cut an overseas vacation short to make it to church. The other possibility, which is much more likely, is that the person simply misspoke, had a brain hiccup, said a habitual parting phrase without really thinking it through.

With another person--even a sincere, honest, pious christian such as yourself--I’m going to assume what is infinitely more likely...that you simply misspoke. You are holy, but you are a fallible human being and you make mistakes. You can say unreliable things, not only by malice or deceit, but by making simple mistakes. But God, cannot. God cannot say something that is not true, both because he is righteous, but also because he doesn’t forget things, or confuse timetables. He does not err. He does not speak carelessly. Even the most honest and reliable human beings word is not perfectly reliable. You could say “see you in church next Sunday” and mean it, and yet a family emergency comes up and you can’t. But that sort of thing never happens with God. His plans are never interrupted, his knowledge is never incomplete. As Arthur Conan Doyle once wrote in the words of his fictitious character, Sherlock Holmes, “Once you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, no matter how improbable, must be the truth.”

God promised Abraham that his descendants would be great and they would come through Isaac. God told Abraham to kill Isaac, and this was before he’d had any children. It is impossible that God misspoke or lied, so that leaves two possibilities. One is that God will call off the command to kill before it is carried out. The other is that, after Isaac is killed God will raise him from the dead so that he can beget descendants for Abraham. Extremely improbably, but with God nothing is impossible.

Jesus answers them, “**Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad**.” Now, Abraham did not see the day Jesus conquered death by rising from the grave. **But by faith, Abraham saw God’s plan of salvation fulfilled in his own son Isaac who did not see death**. When God promised, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named”, Abraham believed him. He knew that God doesn’t lie, and that somehow--despite God’s command to sacrifice his son--Isaac would not die eternally. Abraham new God would either deliver his son from death, or else afterward raise him through death to life. On account of that promise, Abraham saw Jesus’ day and showed perfect obedience.

The faith of Abraham was that he believed God’s promise for Isaac, despite the command that he would be killed.

In the same way, when you believe the words “**Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins**”, you can be certain that your sins have been paid for, even if you did not see Jesus die on the cross. And wherever there is the forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation. These words are a testament to Jesus words, that whoever keeps his word will never taste death. Instead you see Jesus’ death for your eternal life. Is Christ a liar? Did God speak carelessly? By no means. In the Holy Supper, like Abraham, you are seeing Jesus’ day and rejoicing in the foretaste of the feast to come.