

Doing what is right sometimes has consequences...

Jesus healed a man lying beside the pool as an invalid for 38 years

The man got in trouble for carrying his mat on the Sabbath—he broke the rules

Ultimately it came around to Jesus and the fact that he had healed the man on the Sabbath

Now there are consequences...

*Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath. John 5:16 NRSV*

But, as if that wasn't enough, Jesus further upsets them when he claims to be one with God

By claiming this intimacy and equality with God, he scandalizes them

Jesus precipitates a crisis with the Jews

He escalates an accusation of breaking the Sabbath to a theological conflict

But who are these Jews that Jesus is alienating?

For one thing Jesus and his followers are all Jews

The fact is that the Gospel of John is particularly negative about the Jews

Even to the degree that some have labeled the Jews as Christ killers as a result

It has been used to fuel anti-Semitism

However, as we look closer, it becomes clear that “the Jews” doesn't refer to ethnicity or religion

A broad category to which Jesus and John both belong

“The Jews” in John's Gospel are the religious and political authorities, especially around Jerusalem

The Gospel of John was written several decades after Jesus' death and resurrection

Over the years, the conflict among the religious and political authorities has increased regarding Jesus

Truthfully, there were conflicts between Jesus and the scribes, Pharisees, and priests of his day

But John is also writing in the context of the subsequent controversies

The bitterness of John's portrayal of “the Jews” has to do with the experience of Jewish Christians

They were often expelled from the synagogues

Elsewhere, particularly in Acts, we see conflict between Judaizers and Christians

As we look at this chapter and Jesus' words, which spark theological conflict with “the Jews”

It is not probable that John has a record of Jesus actual words from many years before

Over the years, John has remembered Jesus teachings and thought about them at length

They have taken on new meaning in various contexts

What we have here, is probably a compilation of Jesus teachings, overlaid with John's commentary

Woven into them are the “modern” controversies and questions facing the community

Back to the beginning—this whole thing was sparked by Jesus healing a man on the Sabbath

When confronted, Jesus says, “My Father is still working, and I also am working.” John 5:17

This is a Jewish teaching that God works on the Sabbath to sustain creation

Jesus is claiming intimacy, equality and freedom with God—which precipitates a scandal

Jesus is claiming that he and the Father are one, and that he does nothing without God

Jesus proceeds to say that he can't testify about himself—there must be external proof

Jesus has called his witnesses

He cited the most recognized prophetic figure of the day—John the Baptist

He described his miracles and healings as prophetic signs intended to provoke faith

He has invoked the self-authenticating witness of God' presence within the individual

He called upon Moses, the prophets, and all the Scriptures as foretelling his coming

But what about us today—what does this have to say about how we do life with Jesus?

For one thing—it tells the truth about Jesus—that is still true today

The Father and the Son are one—Jesus and God are one and cannot be separated

We sometimes try to differentiate between the Father, Son, and Spirit

But they are One and it is our human limitations that separate them

There is also applicable truth as we try to discern way forward in 2018

All communities of faith must learn to know and discern God's Leadings today

We are given a framework for authority—that it need not depend on any one source

Nor just on one person's word

That as we Listen together, we will be given confirmation and additional knowings

We can come to clarity and base it on a solid sense of way forward

In my teachings, I've often talked about the 3-legged stool—that is solid

Direct Listening to God

Scripture

Faith Community

I loved Lon's addition that 3 legs are sturdy on uneven ground as in an orchard ladder

Because often it feels as if the questions we face are not on solid ground

It is also true that Jesus Leads us to give up the formulaic patterns that we cling to

Life with Jesus causes us to give up the easy answers

Salvation and truth aren't found in our favorite Scripture or beliefs and practices

It is in God alone

Just like "the Jews" were challenged when Jesus didn't follow the rules—do it right

We are often challenged when life doesn't go as we expect

Our assumptions get ripped away

We must depend less on the past understanding of how this will be going forward

And to simply trust Jesus

It's a wild ride and trusting Jesus to show us the way is the only way to be

When we try to control it, things don't work well and we get in trouble

Our expectations don't happen

Trust Jesus to Lead us!