

AND WE BEHELD HIS GLORY - Studies in John's Gospel - Part twenty
Sunday, September 17th, 2023, 10 a.m.

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**THAT ALL MAY HONOR THE SON JUST AS THEY HONOR THE
FATHER**

John 5:15-29 - "The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. [16] And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. [17] But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." [18] This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. [19] So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. [20] For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. [21] For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. [22] The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, [23] that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. [24] Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. [25] "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. [26] For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. [27] And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. [28] Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice [29] and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment."

There are only ***certain*** convictions of the Christian faith that bring hostility from today's culture. No one will reject your Christian world-view for your proclamation that we should all learn to forgive our enemies. You will be applauded if you encourage your hearers to do unto others as they have had done unto them (they won't ***live*** like that, but they'll certainly admire the principle). People are perfectly happy to have you recite Jesus' words about His going to prepare a place for us in heaven. Christian charity is almost universally admired and extolled as hospitals and schools and orphan care are extended in Jesus' Name.

This, for our watching world, is what Christianity ***is***. This is what should be proclaimed and done. And there is a growing band of more progressive evangelicals (at least in their minds) and red letter Christians who can't stand the Apostle Paul but simply equate the Christian message with social justice and humanitarian effort and tolerance for all.

Of course, this gives a wonderful opportunity to go out into the world with all the admiration and none of the offence and rejection. Thus Christian moralism shines minus the offense of the exclusive gospel of the cross. It's a smooth ride.

All of this is what gives today's text headline status. Jesus has a wonderful opportunity simply to do something nice and loving for this lame man and He blows it with His agitating doctrinal bluntness and talk about eternal judgement. First, as we studied last week, He heals, once again, on the Sabbath. He heals in a way that seems *intentionally inflammatory* rather than just waiting until after sundown. I mean, He just doesn't seem to *contextualize* or *adapt* very well.

Then, on top of this, He speaks to these Jewish leaders in a way that seems to totally ignore what He knew to be their religious hot buttons. He seems so unashamed to argue with these monotheists about His own deity and unique relationship with the Father, making it hard to avoid the razor edged conclusion that either Jesus got His approach wrong in speaking to His own cultural setting or we might be not as much like Jesus in our approach as we might think. So this is an important text for us indeed.

- 1) **JESUS' WORK IS ONGOING JUST AS THE FATHER'S WORK IS ONGOING, PROVING THE SON'S WORK IS JUST LIKE THE FATHER'S**

IPAD TEXT - John 5:15-18 - “The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. [16] And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. [17] But Jesus answered them, “*My Father is working until now, and I am working.*”[18] This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was *even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.*”

We probably don't think about it all that often, but the only time Jesus calls His Father **“our”** Father is when He is giving His disciples instruction on approaching God in prayer. And the Jews would have no problem with that kind of **“family”** address to God in prayer. But every other time Jesus talks about God in heaven He calls Him **“my Father.”** **Every** other time. And the Jews knew exactly what Jesus was implying. He was saying **He** was God's Son in a way nobody else was - **John 5:18b** - **“...he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.”**

2) **THE SENTENCE THAT MADE THE JEWS WANT TO KILL JESUS**

IPAD TEXT - John 5:17 - “But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father is working until now, and I am working.’” And then, to make the point crystal clear, John adds his editorial explanation - **John 5:18 - “This was why [the previous sentence] the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.”**

Ten words. Count them. These ten words brought about the end of Jesus’ earthly life. The first offence was the highly personal address of God as **“my Father.”** We’ve already considered that. The second offence was the way Jesus described His **co-working** along side with God Almighty, His Father. **“My Father is working until now, and I am working.”** What can this mean and how does it answer the Jewish objection of Jesus’ healing work on the Sabbath?

Look again very carefully at Jesus’ response in **verse 17** - **“But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father is working until now, and I am working.’”** These are deceptively profound words. Jesus makes it clear that Father God has never stopped working since the creation of the world. How long has Father God been working - **“...until now.”** That’s how the Father has been working - **one continuous, unbroken stretch, from the beginning of time until now.”**

True, the Father took a pause in His **original creation work** on the seventh day. He stopped His original **creating of the world**. But we all know, when we think about it, that Father God has never ceased **working altogether**. The earth keeps its rotation around the sun. Babies are born on the Sabbath. Your lungs keep working on the Sabbath. The cells of your created body keep growing and being replaced. God blesses His people when they meet in His Name to worship Him. He hears and answers prayer without a day off. **He's been busy for ever and ever from the beginning of time**. He's never taken a break. Not for one second.

Of course, all the Jews understood this unceasing work of Father God. But that was **God**. And this is why they're so offended at the claim of Jesus. Jesus, He Himself says, works in this same way. He isn't **Sabbath bound**. His work isn't **shut down** by the Sabbath. Like His Father in heaven, the divine Son is never merely **idle**. He works the works of God in the **same way** that His Father in heaven works the works of God.

While these Jewish leaders didn't understand this, the rest of the New Testament resounds with the same message:

IPAD TEXT - Hebrews 1:3 - “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, *and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high....”*

That is one of the things Jesus does right now, on an ongoing basis. He keeps the whole universe running. Think about what that means. It's a colossal truth. It means the universe doesn't run on its own power. The power of God the Son sustains every heartbeat, every star, every galaxy, every rainfall, every snowflake, every birth, every death, the red and white cells in your bloodstream, the capacity of your brain to process thoughts. The Son of God, in His incredible, unstoppable might, keeps everything from falling apart and diminishing.

That's what Jesus was saying in those ten words about His ongoing work and the Jewish leaders **knew** it. That's why they wanted to kill Him. If Jesus has **that** kind of authority then what He says must carry weight. What He says about sin. What He says about coming judgment. What He says about living water. What He says about His Second Coming. What He says about the only way to God the Father.

Very suddenly, if what Jesus said in these ten words is true, He has more impact than many proud people want to grant. He suddenly turns our world upside-down. Nothing matters more than getting our ideas about Jesus right.

3) **WHAT DID JESUS MEAN WHEN HE SAID “THE SON CAN DO NOTHING BY HIMSELF?”**

IPAD TEXT - John 5:19-21 - “So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, *the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.* [20] For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. [21] For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.”

These are profound words and care must be taken to read them aright - especially **verse 19** - **“So Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.’”**

Jesus doesn't mean He **refuses** do anything but what He sees the Father doing. And He doesn't mean He **shouldn't** do anything but what He sees the Father doing. And He isn't describing who has **more power**, the Father or the Son. That is one way to easily misread these words.

These aren't **power** words. They're **unity** words. This is Jesus telling us all something deep and profound. These are the kind of words that shaped the church's theology of the Trinity around the data of the Scriptures. **Jesus is telling these Jewish leaders He can't possibly act independently of the Father**. There is no way for the Son and the Father to act with **two wills** moving in different directions. The Son can't work without the Father in the same way you can't move your left eye without moving your right eye as well.

The Son is always the Son. The Son is both **equal** and **submissive** to the Father. That's why He is eternally **the Son** rather than **the Father**. But he's not **less** God. Think about it. Who else would dare to say "**whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise**"(19b). Really? **Whatever** the Father does? Could **you** say that? Could any prophet, teacher, or religious leader dare such a boast?

Jesus is God the Son. He is **God** the Son. And He is God **the Son**. Equality and submission. He does what the Father does, but not by **imitation**. He does what the Father does by **divine nature**. We should be grateful Jesus took such care in revealing these deep truths.

Jesus then tells these Jewish leaders there is a deeper manifestation of His glory still to come in the future - **John 5:20 - "For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel."** - IPAD TEXT

And just what these greater works are is the subject of our final point:

- 4) **THERE WILL COME A GLORIOUS DAY WHEN EVERY HUMAN WHO HAS EVER LIVED WILL OBEY THE VOICE OF THE SON**

IPAD TEXT - John 5:21-29 - "For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. [22] The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, [23] *that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.* [24] Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. [25] Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. [26] For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. [27] And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. [28] Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when *all who are in the tombs will hear his voice* [29] *and come out*, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment."

This is a massive thought. It's so big we hardly think of it as real, not because it isn't true, but because we don't know how to process it. It is God's plan that we will be judged by the ***Son of Man*** - **John 5:27** - ***"And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man."***

Just stand back and marvel at the wisdom of Father God. He wills that we are judged by the Lamb who was slain for our sin. The Father wills we are judged by the one who took on our own human flesh and nature to purchase our eternal life. This increases ***hope and gratitude*** in the redeemed and increased ***responsibility*** in those who refuse to follow Christ.

Your body is going to be raised from the dead someday. This will be the Father's ultimate way of having ***honor given to the Son***. Consider this. Picture the most negligent, disobedient, Christ-rejecting human being who has ever lived. Picture the one who never took one second to obey Christ in all the days God so graciously gave him. The last thing that person will hear on this earth will be the command of Jesus calling him out of his grave. And his dead body is going to ***obey*** Jesus Christ.

That's a magnificent thought to me. The last thing in this world's history before judgment is going to be one great universal act of **obedience** to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. There will not be one resister on planet earth. Not one.

5) **GOD'S PLAN TO HONOR THE SON, NOT OUR WORKS**

IPAD TEXT - John 5:28-29 - "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice [29] and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment."

People find these verses confusing. Do they teach salvation by our own good deeds? It looks like it on the surface. But we know we are not united to Christ by our good works. We know this because Jesus said so in this very gospel - **John 15:5 - "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."** - IPAD TEXT

If Jesus is telling the truth - if we can do nothing fruitful in **God's eyes** apart from abiding in the Son, Jesus Christ, then it follows that we can do nothing through our own merit to **get into Christ**. After all, Jesus is the One who said, “....**apart from me you can do nothing**”(15:5). The good fruit - in **God's eyes** - comes only from being **in Christ Jesus** through continuous faith. Or, in the words of our text, the only good that counts with Father God is the kind of good that gives honor to the redeeming grace found in the Son. If my deeds don't specifically point to a redeeming Christ, then they don't please the Father either.

The bottom line is living faith produces Christ-honoring fruit. And apart from abiding in Christ, even humanitarian and charitable works, turn into filthy rags before God. This is why judgment has been “**given to the Son**”(22). It is God's way of revealing to the world that Jesus Christ, God the Son, is the safe, fruitful place - the **only** place to confidently hear the voice of the Son when He calls **your** body from the grave.

Finally, I hope there is no one in this room foolish enough to try to escape that day of future eternal judgment based on the idea that you are better behaved than someone else. Come to the Son who died for your sins today.