

John 5.19-30 Sermon / COB / 03.30.14

Introduction

- † **[Slide 1: title]** Today we will hear a speech Jesus made to the skeptical religious leaders of his day. So you are getting a sermon about a sermon. Now they say that lecture is the least effective teaching method. It's too easy for you to tune me out and start thinking about spring training, eating brownies, or whatever you enjoy thinking about. I imagine the problem is compounded if you hear a lecture about a lecture.
- So I remind you that I do look at you while I preach. I'm just teasing you. But I was thinking this week that while preaching and teaching over the years, I have seen big open mouthed yawns, people with their heads down sleeping, women filing their nails, obvious daydreaming, people reading books – and not even Christian books, but silly romance novels! – I have endured people talking, getting up to leave, changing seats, and answering phones, and for those of you who doodle and/or write down how bored you are, I will remind you that I usually am the one who cleans up the sanctuary and I do know where you sit! So take your doodles with you or place them by Wade's seat so I think they are his!
 - A pastor friend of mine posted on Facebook this week that it was better to be a boring speaker teaching the Bible than to be a gifted speaker teaching anything else, and I agree. But I always do my best to make the sermon interesting as well as useful. And I hope I will continue to get better at that. Today, sad to say, we will not have pictures, but on each slide I have highlighted parts of the text, and I will explain and highlight what Jesus is saying. Even if you think I have little to say, what Jesus says today is incredibly important. His sermon is awesome, even if mine is not. So I hope you can stay focused for half an hour, and see what Jesus has to say. Let's pray...

Exposition

- † **[Slide 2: 5.19-20]** Please turn in your Bible to John 5.19. As we saw last week, Jesus has been talking to the religious leaders in Jerusalem. They were persecuting him for healing people on the Sabbath, and now they want to kill him because they think it is blasphemous [or speaking ill of God] that he calls God his Father and is saying that he and God are in some way equal.

John 5.19-20 [NET]: So Jesus answered them, "I tell you the solemn truth, the Son can do nothing on his own initiative, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he does, and will show him greater deeds than these, so that you will be amazed."

- † We begin with a Greek verb form that suggests this is a solemn or legal utterance. Jesus is answering their opposition to his ministry.
- Jesus begins here with ἀμὴν ἀμὴν, which is translated as "truly, truly," "very truly," or "I tell you the solemn truth." As we have discussed before, Jesus begins some of his most important statements this way; it is his way of saying, "Listen up! Here is the truth!"

- † Jesus just previously had indicated that he and God the Father were somehow equal. Now he shows that this equality does not entail independence from God the Father, rather it presumes unity with God the Father.
 - We believe that God has revealed himself to be triune as God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit, each fully God in his own right and distinct from the others, but all in total unity of will and essence, such that they are one God together.
 - Jesus says that he, the Son of God, cannot act independently, outside of unity, with God the Father. Rather, he and the Father act completely together, in unity. Whatever the Father does, the Son does also, with the blessing of the Father.
 - As the perfect Son, Jesus must perfectly represent and reflect the image of the Father. In this way Jesus also can reveal the Father to us through himself.
 - But to the religious leaders, this would sound like another disturbing claim of deity, that Jesus can do what God can do. They don't believe Jesus is the Messiah promised in Scripture, and they were not prepared to believe that even the Messiah would be both divine and human.
- † The religious leaders knew that God granted life and did miracles even on the Sabbath. Earlier in this speech, we saw Jesus defend his Sabbath healings by referring to God the Father being active on the Sabbath. Here he is building on that idea, saying he does what God the Father does.
 - V.20 explains how that can be. The Father loves the Son such that he empowers him to do all things, even greater things than they have seen so far, so that they will be astonished!
 - These religious leaders are Jesus' antagonists, lacking in faith. His miracles, teachings, and divine authority and power are designed in part to astonish them, perhaps to shock them into faith, perhaps to stymie them in their opposition until the time was right.

[Slide 3: 21-23] John 5.21-23: [Jesus still talking] "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes. Furthermore, the Father does not judge anyone, but has assigned all judgment to the Son, so that all people will honor the Son just as they honor the Father. The one who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him."

- † What greater things does the Father empower the Son to do? How about raising the dead and giving them life! That should dazzle us! This happens a few times in biblical history, but for the most part this thought pertains to the end times. We will talk about that in a moment.
 - Giving life, resurrecting the dead, and judging people are all divine prerogatives in the Old Testament scripture, solely the right of God. But God the Father has entrusted all judgment to Christ the Son, and this entails also the right to grant both physical and spiritual life.
- † The reason Jesus gives for God the Father empowering and authorizing the Son in granting life and proclaiming judgment, is so that people will honor the Son just as they honor the Father. The Son and the Father should be honored equally, because they are equal in essence and are one God.
 - The religious leaders recognized that Jesus was making himself out to be equal with God, and they saw this as blasphemy, speaking ill of God, and so they wanted to kill him. But in reality, glorifying the Son of God glorifies the one who sent him, God the Father.
 - **[Slide 4: Philippians 2.8-11]** Turn in your Bible to Philippians 2.8-11. We'll take a look at something Paul wrote about this. Philippians 2.8-11 [NET]: "He [Jesus] humbled himself, by

becoming obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross! As a result God exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow— in heaven and on earth and under the earth [i.e. all the people who ever lived!]— and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” So it brings glory to God the Father when everyone honors Jesus, the Son of God.

- **[Slide 5: Isaiah 42.8]** Let's look at an Old Testament passage. Turn to Isaiah 42.8: God the Father declares [HCSB], “I am Yahweh, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another or My praise to idols.” This is why the Jehovah's Witnesses are so wrong: God would never allow us – let alone instruct us! – to give glory to anyone other than himself! But the real Jesus is not another entity, he is in unity with God the Father, part of the Godhead of Father, Son, and Spirit. So when we give glory to Jesus, we are not giving glory to some other created individual or some other god, we are giving glory to God the Father through God the Son.
- And Jesus teaches that anyone who does not honor the Son for who he really is – anyone who does not recognize Jesus as the divine Son of God, anointed by God the Father as judge, high priest, and king, sent by God the Father to be the promised Messiah-Savior – anyone who does not honor the Son is not honoring God the Father, who sent him.

[Slide 6: John 5.24] John 5.24: [Jesus still talking] **“I tell you the solemn truth, the one who hears my message and believes the one who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned, but has crossed over from death to life.”**

- † Again Jesus begins with “Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν,” so we can again expect something profound. This time he is talking about who receives spiritual life.
 - The one who hears Jesus' message does more than acknowledge the sound: he or she hears it, understands it, and believes it. If we believe in his gospel, in his message about who he is and what he offers through his death and resurrection, and if we believe in God the Father – the one true God of the Jews – then we have eternal life.
 - Notice two implications of this: first, that in the moment of faith, we cross over from spiritual death to spiritual life; in that moment the Holy Spirit regenerates us and we are given a spiritual connection with God. We move from death to life, from darkness to God's light! Right now.
 - Second, that this life, this connection with God is eternal. It is not just for this lifetime, it is forever. And that means at the end of time, when every person faces judgment, we will not be condemned, because Jesus the judge himself paid the penalty for our sins.
 - Some translations say we “will not come into judgment” or “not be judged,” but this is what they mean: it is not that we avoid facing Jesus at the end, but that we can face him with confidence, because he already has issued his verdict in our favor!
- † Perhaps you think you have committed the unpardonable sin, something God could never forgive. Maybe you killed your parents, chopped them up, and ate them; maybe you molested little children; maybe you committed treason or once were a serial killer... whatever the worst sin you can imagine doing, the blood of Jesus is sufficient to cover it.
 - We said last week that you could never be worthy of salvation, you can never be good enough, but that's ok, because salvation depends on Christ being good enough, not you. All God asks you to do is believe in his offer of salvation through Christ, his offer of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

- This week, we say the same thing from a different perspective: you can never be bad enough that you could not be saved, because Christ paid the penalty for all sin by the whole world for all time, so salvation depends on Christ giving you life – on Christ having the Holy Spirit regenerate you to spiritual life – not on how bad or good you have been.
- † In our development class last week, we were talking about this. Christ redeemed us, which means he paid with his blood to give us freedom from the power of sin, death, evil, and guilt from the Law.
- And when we put our faith in that promised redemption, God the Father declares us righteous in his sight – no matter what we have done! – by allocating the righteousness of Christ to us! We call God’s declaration that we are righteous “justification” and we call the righteousness of Christ being accounted to us “imputed righteousness.”
 - This is all possible, because when the Son of God came as Jesus, the one perfect person, and sacrificed himself on the cross for us, that satisfied God’s wrath about our sin, and so instead of condemnation we now get mercy. We call this satisfaction “propitiation” and our reconciliation with God “atonement.”

[Slide 7: 5.25-27] John 5.25-27: [Jesus still talking] “I tell you the solemn truth, a time is coming– and is now here– when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in himself, thus he has granted the Son to have life in himself, and he has granted the Son authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.”

- † Again with “truly, truly,” “ἀμὲν ἀμὲν”! Here we learn why Jesus can give life.
- First, as the Son of God, he also is the prophesied Son of Man. We learned earlier that Jesus frequently called himself the Son of Man, which is another name for the Messiah promised in the Old Testament.
 - The Son of Man in prophecy was the one God chose to be his eternal king and ultimate representative. If Jesus is God’s king and representative, it makes sense that he also is God’s judge, who can give life or condemn someone to death.
 - And second, God the Father has granted to Jesus as the Son of God to have life in himself, just as the Father has. We learned that right at the start of this gospel.
- † When we talk about life and death here, we mean both physical life and death and spiritual life and death.
- The time is coming, Jesus says, for the eschatological judgment, that is the end times judgment of all people.
 - But he says the time is now here because he has come, and so just as the physically dead can experience resurrection life at the end of time, right now the spiritually dead can be brought to spiritual life. Those who respond to the voice of the Son, those who believe in what he says about himself and his offer of salvation, will have eternal spiritual life now, and will be resurrected at the end of time to a new life with Christ.
 - We saw in chapter three that those who believe in the Son of Man lifted up on the cross will receive life; those who reject this revelation will remain condemned and in spiritual death.

[Slide 8: John 5.28-30] John 5.28-30: [Jesus still talking] “Do not be amazed at this, because a time is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out– the ones who have done what is good to the resurrection resulting in life, and the ones who have done what is evil to the resurrection resulting in condemnation. I can do nothing on my own initiative. Just as I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I do not seek my own will, but the will of the one who sent me.”

- † Now we clearly are talking about the end times. Jesus will resurrect all the dead and judge every person who has ever lived.
 - As we have seen earlier in this book, those who have responded to the gospel, who have been saved by Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit, will run to the light and let their good works glorify God. These people will receive a sentence of eternal life. If you are truly a believer, truly born again, then this is you, and you should have no fear of death or of facing Jesus the judge.
 - In contrast, we learned before that those who do not know Christ intimately as Savior are walking in spiritual darkness, and so they do “base” things, things that are beneath God, sinful, evil. Because they have not received grace through faith in Christ, they are not born again, they are not spiritually united with Christ and reconciled with God, and so they will rise up on that last day to face a judgment of eternal spiritual death, what we call Hell.
 - If you do not fully believe in Christ yet, I am glad you are here. I know this is a disturbing teaching, but I think maybe Jesus is hoping to astonish you to take a step toward faith. I hope God will continue to bring you here to have fellowship with us and to learn more about Jesus, and that you will come to saving faith in him.
- † Jesus closes this portion of his speech on the same theme as when he started. He is a just judge because he has no personal bias in judging, he does not act on his own, rather he judges consistent with the judgment of God the Father in each case.
 - Thus the complete unity between the Father and the Son leads to the Son’s role as the image bearer, the ultimate representative, the king, the Savior, the eternal judge... and also leads to the Son’s perfect fulfillment of those roles for the Father.

Conclusion

- † **[Slide 9: conclusion]** As we noted before, either Jesus is worthy to be worshipped as God or he should be dismissed with pity or scorn as a crazy person or liar. If you take this as John’s assertion instead of Jesus’ then the same holds true: either Jesus is divine as John says, or we have to dismiss John’s entire witness as the ravings of a lunatic; there is no middle ground.
- † Jesus testifies that he is the Son of God.
 - As the Son, Jesus is so in unity with God the Father that he can do what God the Father does.
 - As the Son, Jesus is so in unity with God the Father that he does do all things with God the Father, in unity.
 - That means Jesus can give life, both physical life and spiritual life.
 - And Jesus is God the Father’s anointed judge, now and at the end of time.
 - And Jesus deserves the same honor as God the Father.

- As the Son, Jesus is so in unity with God the Father that eternal life is for those who believe in God the Father and recognize that God the Father sent the Son of God to come as the human Jesus to be our Savior.
 - Such people receive right now a regeneration to spiritual life by the Holy Spirit, have the Holy Spirit indwell them as a seal of salvation for the time of judgment, and begin the process called progressive sanctification by which they become more like Christ in character and lifestyle.

† **[Slide 10: blank]** Let's pray... I believe God has brought each of us here today for a reason.

- For some of us, it is time to recognize Jesus for who he is. Are you ready? Can you believe that much, that God is real, that God the Father sent the Son to come as the promised human Messiah-Savior? That would be a big step of faith. If this is true for you, pray now that you accept the identity of Jesus.
- [pause] For some of us, it is time to recognize Jesus' power for our lives. Can you believe that Jesus can heal you, can mend your relationships, can help in your work, can improve your children's behavior, can do whatever you need him to do? And can you believe that he will sustain you and empower you to endure even when he does not answer your prayers the way you want? That also would be a big step of faith. Pray now that you are confident in his power to bless and in his power to sustain you even in hard times.
- [pause] For some of us, it is time to recognize Jesus' authority in our lives. Can you admit that Jesus as God the Son deserves your respect, your worship, your absolute obedience? Can you admit that Jesus as God the Father's judge and king has authority in your life? That might be your step of faith today. Pray now to commit to showing Jesus the proper respect and to obeying all that he commands.
- [pause] Jesus... each of us here is unworthy of your love and grace, and we are thankful that you came to die for us, so that we could have life in your name. Please help us to recognize what is true about you, and to believe and act on that faith. Amen.