

August 3, 2014
Sunday Morning Service
Series: John
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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THE SON IS GOD John 5:16-29

Jesus of Nazareth was a good man. So says nearly everyone who has any interest in religion. Even the proponents of false religions that rob Jesus of His rightful glory and majesty allow for Him to be the best man who ever lived. But they will not allow for Jesus to be God. That is impossible to human wisdom. And when this conclusion is reached, the creature has just superceded the Creator in his or her opinion. The sad reality is that the creature will never be smarter or stronger than God who creates. Therefore, it is far wiser for us to listen carefully to God as He speaks and to submit to His plan and authority.

Jesus came to His own people, the Jews, and preached the good news that He, being God, came to live like us so that He could die for us and redeem us from sin's penalty. The Jewish leaders were shocked at Jesus' claim. What would you do if you believed that God is one and only one? How would you respond to this man you perceived to be an interloper, a blasphemer, and in short, a fool?

In this passage of John's Gospel, the apostle laid down the root cause for the crucifixion. From this point on in John's Gospel, the conflict is squarely centered on whether Jesus of Nazareth is God. If not, then He was a blasphemer and a fool. But if He was a blasphemer and a fool, He was not a good man. You can't have it both ways. John keeps telling us the story about Jesus so that we will believe all that He said about Himself. And by believing Him, we receive eternal life.

The Reason for Conflict (vv.16-18).

In this text John introduced us to a problem that hounded Jesus until He was crucified. As the Jewish leaders saw it, Jesus broke Jewish

laws. Indeed, He did. But He didn't break God's law. So John concluded, *And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath (v.16)*. Simply put, Jesus had this habit of doing kind deeds on the Jewish Sabbath. For example, we know that He approved of the disciples picking grain on the Sabbath (Mat. 12). He healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath (Mark 3). He healed the woman with back problems (Luke 13). He healed the man with dropsy (Luke 14). And He healed the blind man on the Sabbath (John 9).

It appears that Jesus intentionally did good and miraculous deeds on the Sabbath. He did indeed! This was the important issue that cracked open the reality that the religious leaders were not about to concede that Jesus of Nazareth was who He claimed to be. Jesus focused on good works on the Sabbath because it was one of the major points in the Jew's worship of God. Saturday was a day set aside for the express worship of God, just like Sunday once was back in the day of "Christian America." Now it appeared that Jesus was attacking a major component of worshiping God.

As a result, the authorities were persecuting Him. It was not that they really expected God to obey their man-made rules. In fact, God the Son didn't need to obey their rules about Sabbath. That might have been okay if they thought for one minute that Jesus was God. But they were not convinced at all that Jesus was God the Son. Furthermore, they believed it was wrong for humans to pretend to act like God. Jesus acted like He was God, which was horrible in their thinking because they were sure Jesus was another human just like them.

So why was He claiming a prerogative that belonged to God alone? Well, that is just the point. Jesus claimed to be God. That was the root to all the conflict. Those religious authorities understood exactly what Jesus meant when He answered them, *"My Father is working until now, and I am working" (v.17)*. Instead of arguing whether the Rabbinic laws about the Sabbath were valid or were what God intended, Jesus said something that was more shocking. Jesus said that He was just continuing the work of His Father—God—the Creator and sustainer of life. Healing and doing good works on the Sabbath was the continuation of God's work. Jesus taught that God didn't make the Sabbath for Himself, but for His created beings. God worked six days creating all things and then sanctified, set apart the seventh day to establish the

principle of a day of rest for His creatures. Everyone knew (if they would stop to think about it) that if God quit working on the Sabbath, the whole creation would disintegrate.

Also, everyone knew that Jesus claimed to be one with God in the work of sustaining the Creation—even during the Sabbath. Therefore, Jesus was not simply claiming to be a unique child of God but was claiming equality with God. The religious authorities understood what Jesus was saying and concluded *not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God (v.18b)*. This man broke the clear law of the Sabbath. Granted, there was the issue of God’s law about the Sabbath contrasted to their law about the Sabbath, but Jesus still broke the law in their opinion. Now Jesus compounded His offense in their eyes by claiming that He broke the Sabbath law because He has the same prerogatives as God—which means that this mere man was attempting to replace God, or present himself as an alternative to the one true God. That is what the phrase *making himself equal with God* means.

That Jesus of Nazareth attempts to replace the one true God is the accusation of many false religions. Could that be a fair accusation? How can Jesus of Nazareth be God without replacing the one God? Jesus’ next statement in reply to the religious leaders’ doubt (v.19) explains that He is not replacing God but simply doing the work God sent Him to do.

As a result, the authorities concluded they would have to kill Jesus. *This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him (v.18a)*. They were convinced that the man Jesus was guilty of gross blasphemy. He was “speaking down” on God, discrediting the God of Israel. At the very least, He was taking the name of Yahweh in vain by claiming that He was equal to Him. Therefore, the Jews felt justified in their conclusion. God’s law was clear. Such a person must be killed. *Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him. The sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death (Leviticus 24:16)*.

That is why the authorities were seeking more and more the opportunity to have this boastful, blaspheming man put to death. If the leaders had misunderstood Jesus’ claim, He would have been quick to straighten them out and prove that He was not guilty of blasphemy. But it was clear that they understood exactly what Jesus implied regarding His relationship with Yahweh God. Therefore, instead of trying to

correct the rulers’ wrong conclusion, Jesus compounded His claim to deity.

The Father Expects People to Honor the Son (vv.19-23).

People should honor God the Son because the Son does what the Father does (vv.19-20). Jesus told the Jews that He was doing the right thing because He did what He observed the Father doing. *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” (v.19)*. Yes, it is absolutely true from statements like this one that Jesus did not hesitate to make Himself equal with God. But He never implied that He was independent of God the Father. He is the unique Son of God (1:49). He should truly be called God (1:1, 18; 20:28). He is right to take divine titles (8:58). He is right to do miraculous works on the Sabbath (5:17). But He never did any work independent of God the Father. Jesus Christ, God the Son, was always submissive to the Father’s will.

That conclusion helps us understand that very difficult statement that Paul made regarding the husband’s position as the head of the wife. *But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God (1 Corinthians 11:3)*. We understand Christ being the authority over all people. And we understand the idea of the husband being the God-ordained authority over the wife (though not every one likes that idea). But here God the Son explained that He was indeed submissive to the Father. At the same time, because He is submissive to the Father, the Son will work just like the Father does. That’s why He was healing on the Sabbath. That’s what God does! And He is God!

This was God’s plan for verification. Jesus taught, *“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” (v.20)*. The relationship between Father and Son is built on love. The word here tells us that the love between the Father and the Son is *phileo* love. That is the deep love between siblings or children and parents. This is the only time in the New Testament where this kind of love is attributed to the Father and Son. It is an ongoing characteristic of the Godhead (present tense).

Because the Father loves the Son, the Son knows all that the Father does—and does the same Himself.

Then Jesus told the critics that it is even going to get greater. He promised that He would do many more marvelous works. For example, He was going to raise people from the dead. More than that, He Himself would lay down His life and then take it up in resurrection. Why the amazing, breath-taking works? So that people will marvel. Is that it? Is that the whole reason for Jesus' powerful signs? The miracles were to arrest the people's attention so that they would have to answer the hard questions like, "Who is this man?" Jesus' miracles were expressions of God's grace to draw people to Christ for salvation—when they believed.

As a result of His mighty works, the Eternal Judge should receive honor (vv.21-23). Jesus is the Eternal Judge because the Son is the authority over life and judgment. *For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will (v.21)*. Jesus must be equal with God the Father if He raises the dead (v.21). That is the nature of the work done by the Author of life. God breathed life into our first parent Adam and he became a living soul. God created Eve out of Adam. God raised the dead through His servants Elijah and Elisha. All the Pharisees believed in the final resurrection to eternal life. Now Jesus taught that He possesses the same authority.

Indeed it is true: "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). The conversation in this setting probably took place after Jesus had raised the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7) and the daughter of Jairus (Luke 8). In a few months, Jesus was going to raise Lazarus. That miracle would make the rulers so angry that they will seek to kill both Jesus and Lazarus, who is the verification of Jesus' claim to equality with God. As if those resurrections were not enough, in the end Jesus Himself will rise from the dead which hammers the final nail in the coffin of the religious leaders' argument against His deity. It was clear that Jesus of Nazareth possessed the same power and authority as God the Author of life.

And if Jesus possesses that authority, He must also be the eternal Judge. So Jesus declared, "*The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son*" (v.22). That statement would have shocked the Jews. The Old Testament taught that God is the judge of all the earth. Abraham asked, "*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?*" (*Genesis 18:25b*). Hannah prayed, "*The LORD will judge the ends of the*

earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the power of his anointed" (*1 Samuel 2:10*). Asaph declared, "*Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!*" (*Psalms 82:8*). The Psalmist prayed, "*Rise up, O judge of the earth; repay to the proud what they deserve!*" (*Psalms 94:2*).

Now Jesus declared that the one true God has made this full and eternal judgment His responsibility. The rulers must have been flabbergasted. But what does the Bible promise? Paul taught that the day is coming *when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus (2 Thessalonians 1:7b-8)*. He warned the wise philosophers in Athens to pay attention, "*Because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a Man whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead*" (*Acts 17:31*). And so it will be as Jesus promised about religious folks on the day of judgment: "*And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness'*" (*Matthew 7:23*). He is the Eternal Judge.

Therefore, it is also true that honor befits the Son well. Jesus told the rulers "*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 (v.23)*." The rulers thought they honored God by rejecting Jesus. Jesus taught just the opposite. The way to honor God is to honor Jesus Christ His Son. To diminish the power, majesty, or authority of Jesus Christ in anyway, to make Him to be less than God, is to dishonor God. To dishonor God is to be liable for His wrath. So Pilate's question would be the most important question to answer for all eternity. "*Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?*" (*Matthew 27:22*).

The Son's Greatest Honor Is to Grant Eternal Life to Believers (vv.24-29).

God the Son offers eternal life. Jesus said, "*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*" (v.24). The key to this eternal life thing is to believe what Jesus says. Many people have heard and still hear Jesus' words without believing.

They argue with what He says. They refuse to accept what He teaches because it is impossible.

So, just what is it that Jesus says? He says that He is God the Son. He says that He is eternally equal to God the Father. He says that God's plan in eternity is that His sacrifice of His blood on the cross is the only acceptable sacrifice to atone for a sinner's offense against God. People who believe God's plan which is unveiled in Jesus' teaching, have eternal life. Eternal life is a quality of life that emulates the character of the eternal Son and eternal Father and demonstrates the character of the eternal indwelling Holy Spirit. Eternal life is also the perfect life that will in the future be lived out in the presence of God forever.

The result of believing what God says about Jesus is a matter of passing from death to life. By simply believing what God taught and revealed through Jesus Christ, the sinner who deserves eternal condemnation because of his or her sins receives eternal life instead. The difficult part about believing is that it is more than intellectual ascent. To believe God's Word is to rest in full dependance upon the Bible, which is reflected in a life that knows the Bible and seeks to live the Bible. It has been well said, "If we don't live it, we don't believe it."

One day everyone will believe Jesus (vv.25-29). That will happen when Jesus calls everyone out of death to life (vv.25-26). People who have died will hear Christ's command to live. "*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*" (v.25). One day all the people who have died will hear a command from the Son of God to rise. Everyone will come to life in an eternal body. Some to life everlasting, some to eternal condemnation. That is why Christ challenged people by the "already/not yet" statement. On the one hand, Jesus taught that the hour is coming when all the dead will respond. On the other hand, Jesus taught that the time was now. Now it was the right time for all spiritually dead people to listen to the voice of the Son of God as He spoke. Now is still the time to hear His voice because He gives spiritual life now even as He will give physical life in the future.

He who creates has authority to renew life. "*For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself* (v.26)." Christ will raise all the dead as surely as He raised Lazarus, Jairus' daughter, and the widow's son. Because He is God the author of life.

Okay, so everyone comes to life in a future day. Then what? Jesus the Son of God will give dead people life in order to judge them (vv.27-29). The persecuted Son is the final judge. Not only does God expect the Son to receive honor, but "*He has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man* (v.27)." Resurrection to life will result in judgment for most people. This would have been a shocking statement that would cause the Jews to marvel.

The stark reality which we must grasp sooner or later is that everyone will live somewhere forever. That's what Jesus said. "*Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment*" (vv.28-29). Jesus assured the marveling people that one day everyone who has died will hear His command to rise and no one will be able to resist. This is a broad reference to the idea of general resurrection. We know that those who have died in Christ will experience a resurrection of their bodies at the rapture (1 Thess. 4: 16). We know that people who will be murdered for trusting Christ during the Tribulation will be raised before the Millennium (Rev. 20:4). We know that other believers will be raised at the end of Millennium (Rev. 20:5). These various resurrections are called the "first resurrection." All of these people have done good in that they have trusted God's word about Christ and receive eternal life.

But the rest of the people, the majority of the human race who have died throughout history, will be raised also. They are raised to be judged according to their works. Their works, revealed at the Great White Throne judgment, will condemn them forever. Christ the Judge will judge them and condemn them to eternal hell in a living body.

This not a maybe or might be kind of thing. There are no ifs, no buts, no maybes. Jesus of Nazareth is God the eternal Son. He lived perfectly, died innocently, paid the penalty for sin, and won the right to stand as the eternal Judge of all. We all will face our Creator one day. The question is, will you believe His words and face Him as your Savior, or will you doubt His word and face Him as your Judge?