

“Jesus Calls to Life to Those Who are Dead”

John 5:16-30

Three weeks ago - on Father's Day I taught from this text introducing it like this;

“I've chosen not to digress from John for Father's Day because of the bedrock this passage presents for life. One thing has become very clear to me over my years of being a Christian – and especially in the ministry I've had as a pastor speaking into the lives of others - At its core – in its essence – reality is fixed. In its many expressions (let that read symptoms) it is incredibly diverse and confounding. Nonetheless it is an unrelenting, unyielding, inexorable force and demands a reckoning. There is nothing that makes sense of reality in all of its confounding details except the gospel – the heart of which is the ultimate reality over all reality - God Himself!!

This passage tends toward weaving it all together with the declaration that Jesus is the Gospel – ***He is the glorious and ultimate reality who demands a reckoning.*** To understand Jesus is to understand what is actually happening in any given moment in your world and to know what it actually means. To embrace Him by faith is to live in unshakeable hope in the most uncertain times. ***There is nothing more important - no body of knowledge and no critical skill set - for you to teach or pass on to your children than the gospel. There is no person more critical for them to know than Jesus!! This passage presents Jesus as the absolute and glorious reality who demands a reckoning from us all! THEREFORE, to set your children right with Jesus is to set them absolutely right in the reality of life and eternity (cf. 1 John 1:1-4; 3 John 3-4)!”***

As I mentioned then – it was my intention to return to this passage and unpack it more carefully and somewhat in layers.

In the studies of John's gospels scholars consistently identify 3 key elements used in making the argument that Jesus is the Son of God Incarnate, the promised Messiah and the Savior of the world (cf. 20:30-31). They first speak of the miraculous signs which Jesus did (cf. 21:24-25). They also speak of the “I am” statements or declarations of Jesus – with and without predicate. Scholars also note that John's argument is supported by the discourses of Jesus which John records and which often explain or give depth to Jesus miraculous signs (cf. John 6 – the feeding of the five thousand followed by the Bread of Life discourse which includes an “I am” with predicate – “I am the bread of life.”). This is one of those occasions in which Jesus performs a miracle and then gives a discourse. Remember that this entire discourse was prompted by the reaction of the Jews to Jesus healing at the pool of Bethesda (“house of mercy”) of the man who was crippled for 38 years. That healing took place on the Sabbath – we noted that it was intentional on Jesus part to visit the pool on the Sabbath most likely to set up this confrontation. This can be inferred by the way 5:16-18 are worded or put together – v.16 – John unveils the reaction of the Jews to Jesus' Sabbath day healing; v.17 – Jesus responded to their “persecution” by declaring that He was participating in the ongoing work of His Father (the work of

redemption which began in Genesis 3); v.18 – the Jews rightly infer that Jesus was making Himself equal with God by referring to Him as His Father.

However, Jesus doesn't leave this in the form of an abstract theological discussion. It lives in the context of the very real gospel hope of Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Exaltation. This partnership, in which the Father and the Son (Jesus) share is that to which John alludes in 1:1-4, 14, 18 and it is that work to which all of Jesus' miraculous works point as signs designed to illicit saving faith (cf. John 20:30-31) – it is the reason Jesus attaches the healing of this man on the Sabbath as partnership in the ongoing work of the Father (redemption).

I want to make four observations from this text but first I want to briefly remind you of something we addressed when we last visited this passage;

Jesus' Response to the Jews Desire to Kill Him is to Declare that the Partnership of the Father and the Son in this Gospel Work is a Partnership of Mutual Love – cf. 5:19-20 – This is the first of four uses of the Greek *gar* – “for” which works to tie this text together around the gospel themes of life and judgement (cf. 5:19, 20, 21, 22).

- Jesus is sent by the Father and does all that He does and says all that He says under the authority entrusted Him by the One who sent Him – **5:19**

- The Father sent Him/entrusted gospel authority to Him because He loves Jesus and Jesus submits to the gospel work given Him by the Father because Jesus loves the Father (cf. John 3:31-36; **5:20**; 14:30-31).

Observation #1: *The Gospel work in which the Father gave Jesus (the Son) to share includes the authority to make alive whom He wishes (the authority of resurrection) - and the authority over all judgement* – 5:19-22, 27

- In vv.21 and 22 we have the 3rd and 4th appearances of the little Greek word *gar* – “for.” The language effectively connects resurrection or “life” and “judgement.” It reads like this; “For just as the Father raises those who are dead and makes (them) alive, so too the Son makes alive those whom He wishes” (v.21). “For the Father judges no one, rather **He has given** all judgement to the Son” (v. 22).

- These are the “greater things” which the Father will show the Son and in which the Son will partner with the Father in this gospel work of mutual love (cf. 5:20).

- The purpose for the authority of “life” and “judgement” which the Father has granted the Son is so that all might honor the Son. In fact – it is made clear that whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father – cannot say that they honor the Father because He sent the Son.

Question: What does this mean that to “honor” the Son – why that language especially as it is connected to judgment? Perhaps John gives us the answer in his purpose statement (cf. John

20:30-31). Certainly it is connected to loving Him and worshipping Him. As we travel through John's gospel we will see so very clearly that to love Him as Jesus – all that it means that He is Jesus – will be to find all of our life in Him – pleasure, cause for joy, hope, identity/meaning, purpose. It is in knowing Him that we have life that braves death and suffering etc. He is our life (cf. Philippians 1:21; 3:7-10 etc.)!! ***We can see from Jesus' next words that to honor Him is to believe in Him (cf. 5:24).***

Observation #2: *Jesus' is given the authority to speak words of life to those who are dead – 5:24-26*

- Jesus speaks words of life to those who are dead – (cf. 5:24; also 6:60-69; Ephesians 2:1-5)
- We who “hear” and “believe” are made alive – given eternal life. We actually cross from death unto/into life (cf. 5:24). It is the powerful transformation which takes place in the present life of one who believes in Jesus – ***with the promise of resurrection!!*** Kostenberger referred to this as John's teaching on inaugurated eschatology OR the “now and not yet” nature of the gospel. Remember the “illumination” which is a part of coming to life – (contrast this with the Jews to whom Jesus speaks - 5:37-40; also Ephesians 2:4-5).

John Piper speaks more powerfully to me about these things than almost any other man. He wrote;

“And the kind of faith I am talking about is the kind that experiences Christ. It is like eating the bread of heaven and drinking the water of eternal life. It is a being satisfied with Christ. The more we see of Christ, the more deeply we know him and treasure him. And the more deeply we know him and treasure him, the more profoundly we are changed by him in every way (2 Corinthians 3:18).”

- 5:24b-25 - Those who presently “hear” His words and “believe” will die. However, life now guarantees resurrection. Our destiny is immediately changed. The trajectory of judgment is replaced by the trajectory of eternal life (cf. 5:24b-25; also John 3:18, 35-36).
- 5:25-26 – I want to distinguish between that which is innate to Jesus as the Divine Son of God – the power to speak life into existence – and say this is different.

*Jesus was present at creation as the agent in creation – He spoke all matter, all existence and yes, all of life into existence by the power of His word (cf. John 1:1-4; Colossians 1:15-16; Hebrews 1:1-2).

*Jesus is the One who holds it all together or sustains it all by the same powerful word (cf. Colossians 1:17).

*God granted His Son to become man and as a man to take upon Himself sin, the curse and death/condemnation – to face it at the cross and to defeat it. In His death He destroys death and in His resurrection He guarantees our life. The reality of sin, rebellion, hatred of God, the curse it

brings to all of creation and the death and condemnation which follows for all humanity – it was all taken to the cross. **NOW, Jesus may give life to whomever He wills and NOW His voice has the power to call those to whom He has given life out of their graves to resurrection.**

*Every saved person has crossed over from death to life AND we all will “hear” His powerful voice in our graves and we will be raised to life (cf. **5:25-26; 11:25-26, 38-44**).

*His life is our life (Colossians 3:1-4; Ephesians 2:6-7). So His resurrection is our resurrection (Romans 8:10-11).

Observation #3: *The Father has given His Son – Jesus – the sole authority of judgement – “all judgement” - over all humanity* – (cf. 5:28-30)

- 5:28-29 - It is simply believers who will hear His powerful voice in their tombs and be raised. Everyone who ever lived will be called out of the grave by the powerful voice of Jesus. There is no one who will be left in their graves!! Every president, every king, every superstar athlete, every celebrity, every billionaire, every brilliant scientist or scholar, every husband/father and wife/mother, every factory worker or accountant, every salesman or coach – everyone who ever lived!!

- 5:27 – Jesus is given this authority because He is the “Son of Man.” Jesus has the sole right to judge because He paid the price to rescue and redeem us. It may be the Father’s offer that we accept or reject but it is the Son Himself who has become man (cf. Acts 17:31; also Luke 3:21-38).

- 5:27-30 – They all will stand before Jesus – the righteous judge and give an accounting for what they have done with Him (cf. 5:27, 30; Romans 8:31-34; 2 Timothy 4:1-8). We will either be called to enter in to the eternal life purchased for us by Jesus or be cast into judgement (cf. Revelation 20:1-6).

Observation #4: *The Father did this so that all would honor His Son – Jesus – even as they honored Him* – cf. 5:21-23, 30

- Philippians 2:5-11 – In the resurrection and at the judgement EVERY knee will bow. We will all bend the knee and acknowledge who Jesus is – some will do so in love and gratitude and they enter into life – others will do so in submission to the blinding glory – as the creature before the Creator but also before the Savior in the horror of anticipated and unarguable condemnation (cf. Isaiah 6:1-5).

- Revelation 5:1-14 – The Son alone is able to break the “seals” and open the book which unleashes the righteous judgements of the Father upon this rebellious world to close this age. He alone is said to be worthy – listen to the reason for the honor He receives in heaven (cf. 5:9-14).

Remember this is a discourse prompted by and giving meaning to the miraculous sign of healing at the pool. Here is a man crippled for 38 years and in despair of finding any relief. Jesus intentionally chooses this man out from among what appears to be many there needing relief.

When Jesus heals this man 38 years of built up limitation and discouragement give way to relief. Clearly in context – Jesus is connecting this healing to the authority given Him to call to life those who are dead and to raise them up on the last day. The agony and suffering of millions upon millions of people who find glorious relief in the work of the Son to give life that is life indeed – that relief is resounding in the worship of Revelation 5 – for both the wonder of life and the end – once and for all – of the rebellion and chaos and corruption of God’s glorious creation.

Where do you stand with Jesus – are you with the worshippers in heaven enthralled by His glory – are you standing aloof and wondering whether He is worth the investment of your life – are you perhaps among the Jews who resent His claims?

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