

## Sermon for November 8, 2015 – Final Judgment

### **John 5:19-24 (NIV84)**

#### Theme: Know your Judge

- 1) *Understand his relationship to the Father.*
- 2) *Listen to his words so as not to fall under judgment.*

<sup>19</sup> *Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. <sup>20</sup> For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. <sup>21</sup> For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. <sup>22</sup> Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, <sup>23</sup> that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. <sup>24</sup> "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.*

Imagine the scene: an overly confident man makes crude advances towards a woman in a bar. She warns him to leave her alone, saying "Don't you know who I am?" The man doesn't care and keeps on harassing her until she leaves - calling her obscene names as she walks away.

A week later the same man goes to court for a DUI offense. Even though it wasn't a minor incident, he is confident that he will be able to schmooze the judge into dismissing the charge. To the man's dismay, when the bailiff says, "All rise," who walks in but the very woman he harassed a week earlier.

What is the moral of the story? If you are going to court, you better know who your judge is.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: our great day in God's court is fast approaching when we will have to give an account for our every thought, word and deed. With Jesus as our guide. Let us consider the most important step in preparing for that day, under the theme: **Know your Judge**  
1) *Understand His relationship to the Father.* 2) *Listen to His Words so as not to fall under judgment.*

#### Part One: Understand his relationship to the Father.

Our sermon text takes place right after Jesus, on a certain Sabbath day, healed a man who had been lame for 38 years lying near the pool of Bethesda. Some Jews took offense and condemned Jesus for breaking the Law. What was Jesus' response? That he had every right and authority to heal on the Sabbath day because of his relationship to God the Father. *Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.<sup>i</sup>*

Therefore Jesus, out of love for those lost souls who were condemning him, explains how his actions testify to exactly who He is. He says: *"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.*

Even though He is a distinct person, Jesus is also "of one being with the Father"<sup>ii</sup> – intimately united with Him. To see and know Jesus is to see and know God. And just as God the Father is always at work for the preservation and salvation of man, so is Jesus.

That the Jews might know Him is exactly why Jesus did what He did – fulfilling all Scripture concerning the Messiah.

And so Jesus goes on to say: <sup>20</sup> *For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.*

Jesus was not some blasphemer – ignorant of God and under His wrath. No, just the opposite was true: Jesus was the only human not standing under God's wrath – the only person with a perfect knowledge of God and perfectly loved by the Father. How so? Because of the divine relationship they shared! And even though this relationship can be seen in the healing Jesus performed, God the Father would glorify His Son by allowing Him to perform greater acts than these. Jesus points the Jews forward to two miracles that would demonstrate his divine Sonship beyond any shadow of a doubt.

<sup>21</sup> *For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.*

The Jews rightly believed that only God can raise a person to life. What conclusion should we draw, then, from Jesus' raising of Jairus' daughter, the widow of Nain's son, Lazarus and even himself after his crucifixion? That he is not only the Son of God, but God the Son!

God the Father has given Jesus the power to raise the dead – not just physically, but spiritually as well. The fact that any of us believe in Christ for salvation is a miracle in and of itself. The Bible says that we were once dead in our sins, hopelessly lost and condemned. But Jesus, in mercy, saved us: not only through His life, death and resurrection, but also by sending His Spirit to awaken new life in us by means of His Word. Our repentance and faith in Christ is all Jesus' divine doing, because of which we joyfully look forward to the last Day when Jesus will raise the dead to either receive eternal life, or be condemned to everlasting shame and contempt.

*Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, <sup>23</sup> that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.*

Only God can judge and condemn. The fact that the Father has entrusted this work to Jesus once again shows that He is the Christ – God the Son in the flesh.

How sad was the situation, then, when the Jews persecuted Jesus for blasphemy when, in fact, they were the ones blaspheming. Without realizing it, they were judging their own Judge; dishonoring the very God whose honor they thought they were defending.

But what about us? Do we really recognize and honor Jesus as our divine Lord and Savior? Sure, like the Jews we might claim to fear, love and trust in Him above all things, but what do our actions say when we skip church: having “more important” things to do than hear the Word and receive the very body and blood He used to win our salvation on the cross?

“Jesus, I love you,” we say. What if Jesus were to respond, “Really? Then how come you don’t make spending time with me in my house your greatest priority? How come you spend almost all the money I bless you with on yourself instead of offering a portion of it to support the ministry of the Gospel? How come you refuse to learn more about me in Bible Class or tell your family and friends about me?” What if Jesus were to say these things to us – what would our response be? I guess all we could say is: Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner!

But the LORD has been merciful to us. Even though we certainly have demonstrated a lack of love towards him, He lacks no love towards us! Jesus' underserved love moved him to take on our flesh in order to pay the sacrificial price needed to redeem us from our sins. In love Jesus showed us our guilt through the preaching of His holy Law. His Spirit led us to repent and trust in His Gospel promises to forgive and save us. Yes, how wonderful it is to know that Jesus is our Judge – He who, with such great love, stopped at nothing to win our salvation. He wants us to ever recognize who He is and live in a constant state of repentance – always turning to him for mercy and help to overcome our sinful desire to wander away from His salvation.

Part Two: Listen to his words so as not to fall under judgment.

Jesus spoke a wonderful promise to the Jews who were persecuting him. *I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.*

In other words: our great Judge promises to pronounce a “not guilty” verdict over anyone and everyone who looks to Him in repentance and faith. This declaration is not merely some future wish. It is a present reality. Right at this very moment everyone who looks to Jesus in faith is justified before God. Such a person has been raised from spiritual death to spiritual life. Eternal life belongs to him.

But where does such faith come from? Only through the means of grace: the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. This is why Jesus places such great importance on studying His Word.

Oh, how sad it is when “Christians” find listening to God’s Word an inconvenience or burden. There are so many other things we want to do on a Sunday morning except go to worship. We are afraid of attending Bible class because we might look stupid. We don’t want to read God’s Word in the morning because we need an extra few minutes of sleep. We don’t want to read a

devotion in the evening because our favorite T.V. show is on and, after watching, we are too tired to concentrate. Besides, we probably would not understand half of what we read anyway.

How easily the devil excuses us from both listening to and reading the Gospel. But have you ever really sat down to think about what you are avoiding? When you neglect reading God's Word at home, you miss out on Jesus' personal message for you - the warnings he wants to give you about the dangers in your life and the personal comfort and strengthening he wants to bless you with as you meditate on His promises.

Have you ever considered what you miss when you miss coming to church on Sunday morning? You miss out on the opportunity to partake in the very body and blood Jesus used to win your salvation on the cross. You miss out on the special instruction and comfort he offers you through His Word and the encouragement of His church.

Have you ever really considered what you miss out by not coming to Bible class? You miss out on the wonderful opportunity to learn more about your beloved Savior. You miss out on the mutual encouragement your fellow brothers and sisters offer you as you grow together in Christ. You miss out in having your questions answered and faith strengthened for life.

And if you continually neglect participating in a Bible class, reading your Bible at home and coming to worship? Well, soon you will miss out on your salvation because: *faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ (Romans 10:17).*

Brothers and sisters in Christ: don't act the fool in front of your Judge – not recognizing who he is. Do not sit in judgment over Him and his Word: accepting from the Bible only what you think is best and rejecting the rest, or worshipping him only when it is convenient for you. Doing these things will cause you to fall from faith into judgment. Rather, know your Judge. Come to Jesus often to hear of his love for you. Listen to his words because they are our only source of guidance, comfort and salvation. As you come to Jesus in faith, you will be justified because of His work for you. Then you can be confident that you will hear Jesus say on the last day: Well done, good and faithful servant! Come and share your master's happiness!' Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> John 5:17-18 NIV84

<sup>ii</sup> Cf. Nicene Creed