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Like Father, Like Son John 5:17-23

Intro: We have now come to the first of many discourses of Jesus in John's Gospel. We have already looked at a couple of episodes that began as conversations (dialogue) but ended as a monologue (Nicodemus and Samaritan).

This discourse is born out of the resistance that begins to mount against Jesus as a result of His healing of the lame man on the Sabbath day. If what Jesus did on the Sabbath got the religious crowd riled up, what He is about to say to them is only going to add jet fuel to their already burning fire of sanctimonious hatred towards Him.

This discourse is not as well known or loved as some that will come later. It doesn't quite have the poetic pop as the "bread of life" discourse or any of the "I am" statement that will be made by Jesus in subsequent chapters. But, the central theme of this discourse is of crucial importance. Nowhere else in any of the Gospels do we hear of Jesus making such a formal, systematic or orderly statement of His own unity with the Father, His divine commission and authority and the evidence of His Messiahship as is found here in **ch5**. In fact, as we will see, it is His claims here in this discourse that will cement the unwavering hostility of the religious rulers that ultimately lead to His death.

This discourse is important for other reasons as well. You see, it's only because His relationship to the Father is what He said it was, it's only because He is what He claims to be that He is able to offer the new birth to Nicodemus or the living water to the Samaritan woman. Subsequently, His claims to be the Bread of life, the Good Shepherd or the Way, the Truth and the Life all depend on the truth that is set forth in this passage. This is why this discourse is so important and it's why it is given first priority in John's Gospel.

This passage can be loosely divided into 3 sections, in the first of which Jesus lays out His relationship to the Father.

This rightly appears 1st because it addresses the problem that comes first in

theological thinking: How can a person know God? Furthermore, supposing it is possible to know Him, how can the things said about God by those who claim to have that knowledge be verified? These questions have been bandied about since the beginning of time and they are still important today; namely because there are many today who say these questions have no answers.

Some rationalize that there is no answer because God Himself never speaks to answer them. This is the default of many secular intellectuals and has even filtered its way into popular thinking. Many people base their belief or rather lack of belief on God because they had gotten themselves in a bind and cried out to God to reveal Himself, to deliver them or just to let them know He was there. Of course, God doesn't respond in the way they expect him to so they fell justified in maintaining their stubborn unbelief. This is almost always how a "God moment" is depicted in movies.

The silence of God is heard the loudest in the area of human suffering. The world is full of suffering but generally God doesn't seem to hear the anguished cries or attempt to alleviate the suffering. This causes many to deny the very existence of God and relegate all religion as meaningless at best and manipulative at worst.

Christianity stands in direct conflict with these views because Christians believe God has spoken, that He has spoken clearly and that what He has said is true! This is the main gist of the discourse. Jesus is teaching that man can know God because God the Father has revealed Himself to man in God the Son.

17- My Father- Jesus' opening statement put the Jews back a bit. To put it in the modern vernacular, Jesus is saying, "My Father works on the Sabbath, and so do I." This is in no way a license for Jews to do what they want on the Sabbath. No, Jesus is saying He is Lord over the divinely instituted Sabbath because He is equal to the Father. And since the Father works on the Sabbath, so does He. But is this really the case? Does God keep His own laws? In particular, does God keep the Sabbath day law?

To assume an affirmative answer is to misunderstand God's role in Creation and the purpose of the Sabbath day. When the Bible says God rested on the seventh day we should understand that God didn't rest because He was

tired from creation, He rested because He was finished with creation. We must never think that the divine rest from creation involved any kind of idleness on God's part because His providential care over His creation is unceasing. We sing **Ps 121:4** that says, "Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." Similarly, Paul tells us in **Col 2** that, "*by Him (Jesus) were all things created...and by Him all things consist.*" Not only did all things come into existence by the creating power of God, all things are continually held together by the sustaining power of God. Since day one of creation, God has been active in creation all the time, on Sabbath days as much as any other day.

Jesus is referring to the unceasing activity of the Father and Himself, without whom this entire created universe would cease to exist. But this is not just true in a physical sense, it's also true spiritually. God's Sabbath rest had been broken by man's sin and ever since the fall of man, God has been graciously busy seeking and saving lost sinners. Thankfully, His work in this area continues today! Are you a beneficiary of this great work?

Now we see why it was that Jesus insisted on healing the lame man on the Sabbath day. It was not just to get the attention of the religious leaders (although it did) nor was it just to ruffle their feathers and offend their legalistic sensibilities (although it did). No, Jesus healed on the Sabbath so He would have an opportunity to teach them – to explain to them with unparalleled accuracy exactly who the Father is, what He is like and what He has been doing.

18- Did the Jews understand all of this? Probably not because they were stumbled on His first words: My Father. The Jews were accustomed to referring to God as "our Father" but to claim God as "*My (own) Father*" was to imply that God was His Father in a special sense. By this, Jesus claimed to partake of the same nature of the Father. He put Himself on a level with God. While this may seem like a stretch to us, the religious leaders instantly understood His claim and immediately changed their accusation of Him from that of Sabbath-breaking to blasphemy because Jesus was openly claiming to be God. This will not be an isolated incident in this discourse or even in this Gospel.

19- Now, if the hostility of the Jews was meant to curb His claims of divinity, it failed miserably. Jesus continues to describe His unique relationship with

the Father in greater detail. **Vs19** is not just a repetition of **vs17** using different words. Jesus progresses from claiming that He and the Father work the same shift to declaring that, in fact, every action He takes is in total concert and perfect unity with the Father. This is an assertion that everything the Father does, Jesus does; and everything Jesus does is also done by the Father. In no uncertain terms, Jesus is claiming that He is one with the Father in all the Father's actions. His relationship with the Father is based on unity – of person, power and purpose. There is an uninterrupted communion that exists between the Father and the Son.

But, not only does this relationship involve unity, it also involves obedience. It is a matter of the will, which means that the mind of the Father and the mind of the Son are united. Jesus doesn't just say He does what the Father does; He says He only does what the Father does! Because they are in unity, Jesus cannot act independent of the Father. This doesn't mean Jesus was a robot who carried out the Father's will without thinking. That's not the case at all. Jesus is a person; He has a personality including feelings and an intellect. He faced real temptations; He had real disappointments and discouragements. Still, in no way did He ever disobey the will of His Father. He always obeyed the Father and He always obeyed Him willingly.

This is what Jesus wants you to do or, more accurately, what He enables you to do when He saves you. The trouble is we are the opposite of Jesus in this area. We are not really interested in obeying God. We are only interested in doing our own thing. We want to run our lives; we want to be "god" to ourselves. Jesus wasn't like that because everything He did was done out of love for the Father and out of obedience to Him.

There is something else implied in this verse. If Jesus exists in complete unity with the Father and His actions are performed in complete obedience to the Father's will then we can safely assume that everything Jesus said or did on this earth has the full and complete backing of the Father's authority. Do you desire to operate in the Father's authority? Do you want to be effective for the kingdom of God in offering pardons and full citizenship to those who are outside? It's only possible by being in full agreement with and complete obedience to the Father's will.

20- Jesus says His relationship with the Father is based on love. The Father loves the Son. The verb tense denotes a continuing, habitual love; meaning

the Father never ceases to love the Son. Is it wonderful to know that there is love at the core of God's nature? How do we know that the nature of God is love? The Bible teaches it (1 Jon 4:8,16) but how do we know apart from the Bible? We know God is love only because of the nature and actions of Jesus Christ who is both God and love. Creation tells us God is a God of order but it reveals nothing about love. Love has to do with a personality. It is a characteristic of persons. How do we know God has a personality that is characterized by love? Jesus Christ loved us and gave Himself for us.

greater works- love always gives; love does not withhold. Thus, the Father shows the Son all the things He does. This implies that the Son does the things He is shown. Jesus' actions do not come from human motivations. He only acts in accordance with divine revelation. He looks forward to doing greater works because He will be shown greater works. The result of this will be to the astonishment of His hearers. What are these greater works? The things that are described in the next 2 verses, namely: **1)** that the Son gives life to whom He pleases and **2)** that the Son will be the Judge of men on the Father's behalf.

21- This was a reference to the OT that any knowledgeable Jew would've recognized. OT taught that only God could give life or raise the dead to new life. God says in Deut 32:39, "there is no God besides Me, I kill and I make alive." In I Sam 2, Hannah acknowledged in her prayer, "the Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up." All thru the OT it is the same; the giving of life – be it physical life, spiritual life or resurrection life – is God's prerogative alone. Thus, when Jesus claimed to be able to give life He was clearly claiming to be God.

22- The same thing is true about judgment. Every Jew knew that one day God would unleash His final judgment on the world of humanity. The OT declares that judgment belongs to God. This is also God's prerogative. So when Jesus claimed to be the One who would actually carry out the Father's judgment, He was also claiming to be God.

Taken together, these statements establish Jesus' claim that He is God and that as God, He acts with the Father from the beginning of all things to the end of all things, from creation to final judgment, from eternity to eternity.

23- This tells us why the Father has committed judgment to Jesus – so "that

all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father.” How do we honor the Son? 1) By acknowledging that He is who He says He is and 2) by submitting to Him and to His teachings. Either Jesus is who He claims to be or He is a liar! If He is a liar, how do you explain all the good He has done in the lives of needy people over the last 2000+ years? Nobody wants to trust a liar and yet, His disciples were willing to die for Him! If Jesus was God in the flesh, if His teachings are backed up by the full authority of the Father, then we must bow to His authority and we must accept His teaching. We must allow our opinions to be shaped by His opinions; we must allow our views to be molded by His views.

This would certainly include His teaching about salvation. Later in **ch14:6** Jesus will declare about Himself: “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” That’s pretty exclusive. There is absolutely no wiggle room around that statement. This means there is no ritual, no religious ceremony, no prayer or petition to any other entity that will give you access to or place you in a right standing before the Father other than Jesus Christ.

Are these things true? They are if Jesus is who He said He is! If He is God then they have to be true. He is the way, the only way to the Father. Do you believe this? Are you ready to honor Him in His teaching about salvation by accepting it for yourself?

Are you willing to honor His teaching about the Christian life? The Bible is full of His instructions on how we should conduct our lives. Do you attempt to follow it? It’s the only sensible course of action for anyone to follow. The principles and truths He taught concerning life would benefit anyone who tries them but for the Christian, it is our duty to learn them, apply them and obey them. We honor our Lord by allowing His word to alter our lives for the advancement of His kingdom. 😊