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Life and Judgment

John 5:24-29

Intro: We currently find ourselves in the middle of the first discourse of Jesus recorded in John's Gospel. It is perhaps one of the lesser known discourses but it is in no wise less important than the others because it literally lays down the foundational truths about Jesus Christ from which all His others claims will proceed. This discourse can be divided into 3 sections, the first in which, Jesus offers a glimpse of His relationship to the Father. As we saw last time, this relationship at its core is based on love – mutual love between the Father and the Son.

But, if there is one word that encompasses the entirety of the relationship between the Father and the Son, it would be unity! Father and Son are unified in their personages. Every attribute and characteristic that is possessed by the Father is also possessed by the Son. They share the same divine nature. In fact, the only difference that exists between the Father and the Son is the roles each one fulfills within the God-head. The Son, though no less God than the Father, willingly submits Himself to the will and directives of the Father. Thus, this relationship also involves an obedience on the part of the Son that is 100% compliant (willful) and 100% complete (perfect). The Father and Son are also unified in power (omnipotence) and in purpose (attitude and actions). Clearly; the point of the first part of this discourse was to reveal to the religious leaders that Jesus is on the same level as the Father: that He is God!

The next section, our text today, wraps up the revelation of Jesus' relationship with the Father and moves on to reveal the extent of the Son's divine commission and His authority. This was mentioned briefly in the 1st section but is developed in more detail here; namely: 1) that the Son has been made the Giver of life and 2) that the Son has been granted the authority to be the final Judge of every man and woman at the end of all things.

Life is an important subject to every member of the human race – where would we be without it, right? We could say beyond any dispute that every human being is not only concerned with life but the quality of the life they

possess. If that were not the case, advertising agencies would go out of business. Nearly every ad ever produced promises a better life by improving its quality. Sadly, the constant barrage of promises for an abundance of life we face today are woefully inadequate. In fact, most of them are detrimental to our quality of life but even the best of these man-made solutions fades into insignificance when we consider the great offer of life that's presented to us here by Jesus.

Life is an important theme for John in this Gospel. He makes reference to it in the very beginning (1:4). In ch3, He speaks with Nicodemus about the new birth. In ch4, He offers the Samaritan woman living water. This theme will occur over and over in the discourses that follow. Finally, it is revealed in ch20:30-31 that John's main purpose for writing this Gospel was to impart life to those who would believe on Jesus. It's also one reason why He came to earth.

I only mention this to point out a sub-context that runs through our passage today. On one level, Jesus reveals His divine commission and authority while on another level, as it relates to the theme of life, these vs. take us through the entire scope of the believer's experience with the Lord. First, vs24 talks about the eternal life that is given to men which is characterized by hearing and believing in Jesus Christ. Next, vs25 tells us that in this present time, after we have become Christians, God gives abundance of life through Jesus Christ. Finally, vs28-29 refers to a special manifestation of that life that will be experienced in the resurrection of our physical bodies by Jesus Christ. These verses deal with the divine life that God gives freely and they teach us that it's possible for us to live that life today!

24- The unity of the Father and Son is also seen in the way people are saved. This unity is affirmed in a striking way in the blessing of eternal life is possessed by those who hear the Word of the Son and believes in the Father. The term "My word" refers to the whole message of Jesus. That's to be expected but belief in the Father is a bit unusual. Normally, the object of saving faith is Jesus but we must remember that the theme of this whole passage is the unity of the Father and Son. All those who believe in the Father, who give credence to or accept as true, will accept Jesus. It is not possible to believe what the Father says and then turn away from the Son – that just cannot happen.

Anyone who, by faith, believes the Father and the Son has eternal life. The verb tense indicates that it is a present possession, not something that comes later. Now, while possession of eternal life is the present state of a believer, it also has important implications in the future and this is pointed out by the idea that the possessor of eternal life shall not come into judgment – will *not* be condemned. It's the author's contention that initial judgment takes place in the here and now. People who chose to remain on the path of darkness and evil have already been judged and their final judgment will reflect their own choice. Judas didn't sell out Jesus for 30 pieces of silver; he sold himself out for it

What's true of the condemned is true of the redeemed. Their vindication is present in the here and now. They've already passed right out of the state of death and have come into life. Those who don't come into judgment here will not come into judgment on that last great day either; they'll incur no sentence of judgment on themselves. This points to the permanent safety of the believer. To have eternal life here and now is to be secure throughout all eternity.

The words of Christ in this verse should not just be taken as a statement of fact. They are that, certainly. Anyone who hears and believes has eternal life. But these words also constitute an invitation by Jesus, a challenge even. They are a call to make a decision. They are a call to hear what Jesus is saying and to take a step of faith.

Now, while the initial call of God and the granting of eternal life are critically important, we must not think that they are the whole story. There is also the present life of the believer and the resurrected life that will occur in the future. Jesus goes on to speak about these two further aspects of the life He gives in the next few verses.

25- What is Jesus speaking about here? On the surface it seems like He's referring to the final resurrection but that can't be the case because He prefaced this statement with the phrase, "the hour is coming and now is..." The final resurrection is not occurring now but what Jesus is referring to in this verse is. Is He talking about salvation? Well, that's what He was talking about in **vs24** and there, the verb tense for eternal life indicated a past event that results in a present reality (possession of). Here, the verb tense for life is future – "those who hear will live." This means that what Jesus has in

mind here is the increasingly abundant present life of those who believe in Him.

In **John 10:10**, Jesus says that He has come, “that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly.” He is speaking about to things here: the fact of eternal life and the quality of that life experienced by believers on this earth. Eternal life rightly must come first. It is given to those who hear and believe. After this, the child of God now has the capacity of entering in an ever increasing way into the experience of that new life within. How? By believing! We have no problem trusting Him for our eternal life but when His word tries to order our present life, we balk and turn away. The abundant life of Christ comes the same way as the eternal life: by believing and accepting His word.

Is your Christian life abundant? It should be painfully obvious that it’s possible to be a Christian and completely miss out on the abundant life promised by Jesus – many Christians do. Still, it’s your privilege as a child of God to enter into that abundant life in an ever increasing way as you permit Jesus to change your life daily (by the Spirit / Word).

26-27- Here, Jesus moves the discussion from life to judgment. All life originates from the Father: except His own. His own life is inherent in His being. The Son has been given a share in this life. He has the same life in Himself as the Father. But, not only does the Father grant the Son the same life as Himself, He also grants Him the authority to execute final judgment on all of humanity. The reason for this: because He is the Son of Man. What does that mean?

It’s possible to take this expression to mean that Jesus will be the final judge of us all because, He too, is man. He shares our nature. While this meaning is possible, you’d expect more than this as qualification to be the final Judge. It’s more likely that we should understand this expression as a reference to **Dan 7:13-14**. These verses serve as an excellent reason why final judgment should be committed to Jesus Christ, the Son of Man. Jesus then goes on to lay out the never before revealed details of just how this final judgment is going to be executed in the future.

Do you know the essential difference between temporary and permanent? Temporary refers to something that can be changed; permanent refers to

something that cannot be changed. This distinction is important for understanding the next two verses for they deal with the subject of God's judgment. The central point being that God's judgment will establish a permanent separation between men. Some will enter into the fullness of the eternal life He has given to them while others will enter into the fullness of what the Bible calls death or condemnation.

28-29- These verses teach 3 very important doctrines; **1) Physical death is not the end of existence.** Clearly, Jesus expected others to continue to exist after death, both good and evil people. In this, He was in line with OT teaching. The idea of an afterlife was not fully developed in the OT but it did strongly promote the concept that life continued beyond the grave. We see it in the description of the deaths of the patriarchs that tell us they were reunited in death to those who had gone before. When Abraham died it's said that he was "gathered to his people" (**Gen 25:8**). The same was said of Isaac in **Gen 35:29**. When Jacob thought his favorite son Joseph was dead, he refused to be comforted by his children telling them, "I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning" (**Gen 37:35**).

The Hebrew word that was translated "the grave" in this verse is actually Sheol. It is also sometimes translated as death, hell or Hades. But we must understand that in the OT, Sheol is not just a generic term for death, it's actually a place name. It's the name of the place to which the dead go to, those who die in faith as well as sinners and heathens. The existence of Sheol is great evidence of life after death and Jesus is endorsing it here.

Before Christ came, it would be possible for devout individuals to dispute over the existence of Sheol and life after death but there can be no doubt of the truth that there is life beyond the grave now. Why? Because of Jesus Christ's resurrection! Jesus passed through the gates of death and returned, bringing undeniable evidence of this OT hope.

2) There is going to be a resurrection for everyone. There'll be a resurrection unto life for believers and a resurrection unto condemnation for unbelievers. This is a glorious statement for believers because it's the final consummation of our great salvation! When God saves a person, He saves all of him. Man was created as a trinity: body soul and spirit. When man sinned, each part of his being came under the curse of sin and God's wrath. When man sinned, his spirit died immediately; then his soul began to die.

Eventually, his body died and returned to the ground.

When God saves a person, He replaces each part of their being with a new part and does it in the order in which they were lost. 1st, He gives them a new spirit. This is the life of God within the believer. During the course of this life, God begins to form a new soul in the believer as they are transformed into the image of Christ. This soul is called the “new man” and it exists alongside the old man which is destined to perish. Finally, God will create a new body that will be united to the new soul and new spirit at the resurrection. It’s this uniting of the new body, new soul and new spirit that the believer longs for. When we receive our new bodies, our salvation will be complete! I can hardly wait!

At the same time tho, Jesus speaks of a resurrection that’s not unto life as just described but unto condemnation. What does condemnation mean? It simply means an eternity without God. Now, God is the source of all good, thus, existing without Him would be bad and is correctly described as being filled with terrors, woes, misery and loud cries.

Let this truth sink in: God has appointed a day in which everyone who has ever lived will stand before Him and be judged. Death is not the end. Each of us must stand before Him. Will your judgment be unto life or condemnation? Will the judgment unite you to God for eternity or will it be the means of your eternal separation from Him forever? If you don’t know the answer to that, let me assure you that you can know it and you can know it beyond any question.

3) Your judgment is determined by your relationship with Jesus Christ. If you end up standing before God just as you are, without ever having benefitted from Christ’s death on your behalf or from His offer of righteousness and new life – then God will have no alternative but to banish you from His sight forever. You are sinful, no matter how good you think you are, and God cannot condone sin. Furthermore, because of your sin, you will find yourself the object of His fierce wrath. You are His creation that He has made. Yet, you have rejected His way disregarded His Son who came to earth and suffered the pain of death to save people from their sin.

Then again, if you will come in faith and believe in Jesus Christ and accept all that He has done for you, then God promises to receive you just as He

receives Jesus. In fact, since Jesus is the Judge Himself, it's Jesus who'll receive you and bring you into heaven as one whose sin has already been punished and who now stands, not on the merits of your own soiled character but on the new life that is given by God. How can He fail to receive you after you have received everything He has to offer you? How can He reject you when you come, not as the old creation, ruined by sin, but as His new creation made perfect in the life of the Savior.

Jesus really only have two things to offer humanity: mercy or justice. If you accept His mercy then you'll never have to face His justice. If you are the stubborn type that thinks they're not that bad and have it in your mind that you're going God's justice then you will never get the blessed benefit of His mercy. See, God's justice only ever sends sinners to hell – that's all it does; that's all it can do. But, God's mercy saves sinners and gives them new life and the guarantee that they will never have to face His justice.

Which will it be for you: mercy or justice? You must decide. The decisions of this life will affect the issues of eternity. 😊