

GOSPEL OF JOHN 6

Jesus, The Son

"The Father loves the Son and shows Him all He does..."

"How dare you carry that mat on the Sabbath!" the Pharisees must have shouted at the man Jesus healed in accusatory tones. To carry a mat on the Sabbath, or any burden, was a capital offense in their Jewish oral tradition, the commentary on the law passed down from generation to generation of scholars. "The law simply said that the Sabbath day must be different from other days and that on it neither a man nor his servants nor his animals must work; the Jews set out thirty-nine different classifications of work, one of which was that it consisted in carrying a burden."¹ Consequently, the Pharisees' anger was quickly turned towards Jesus, the one who had commanded the man to carry his mat, when the former invalid pointed out his reason for breaking the law in the midst of the busy synagogue.

John concisely relates Jesus' profound and lengthy rebuttal to the apparent dissension among these religious leaders. Jesus begins his response by stating, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working."² This statement sent the Pharisees into an uproar because Jesus sets Himself apart from the normal categories of work in oral tradition, classing his works with the very works God is always carrying out. To make His point even more clear, Jesus used the term "my Father." While the Jews referred to God collectively as "our Father," not one of them would have dared to claim individually that God was his own father.³ This obvious connection was nothing less than a claim to deity and therefore blasphemy, punishable in Judaic law by death. If this simple statement and the Pharisees response weren't enough, Jesus goes on to lay out the many proofs of His sonship in the verses following, giving a series of For statements.

First, in verses 19 and 20 Jesus states, "Very truly I tell you, 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. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does" (emphasis mine). This picture of a son working with his father would have been very relatable to Jesus' Jewish audience. In that time in Middle Eastern culture, most sons would have been apprenticed to their fathers to learn a trade. This process primarily consisted of the father showing the son how to do the work and allowing the son to do it himself under the careful gaze of the father. In the same way, Jesus claims to do only what the Father is doing, reaffirming and claiming His identity as the Son of God, assuming the authority to do all that God is doing. Jesus is declaring Himself as the perfect revelation of the Father (as He does again later in this gospel).

Secondly, in verse 21, Jesus declares His power to give life: "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." As with the "works" described above, it was understood that "raising of the dead was a prerogative belonging to God alone: 'Am I God? Can I kill and bring

Pre-Article Questions:

1. If you met with your prayer partner from last week, do you have any thoughts, questions, or comments from last week's study?
2. When someone makes a bold statement or claim, how do you usually react?

1. Barclay, William. The Gospel of John: Volume 1. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press. 2001. 212. *Apology: A formal defense

2. John 5:17 NIV

3. Carson, D.A. p. 248-249.

back to life?’ (2 Ki. 5:7).”⁴ The implications of these statements along with Jesus’ claim of delegated authority to judge would have brought to the Jewish mind the end of the world, the last judgment, and the question of resurrection for His Jewish hearers. However: “Jesus’ authority to ‘give life’ on the last day cannot be abstracted from the spiritual life he provides immediately to those who hear his word and believe him. ...That [understanding] in turn demands that we see in the life the believer may now obtain from Jesus not only a foretaste and an anticipation of the resurrection life to come but something of its real substance—a downpayment of it.”⁵ Jesus not only gives eternal life—or rather, is eternal life for those who believe—but in Himself also has the ability to give all people spiritual life, richness, peace, and joy, because of His divine nature.

This reality leads naturally into the third For statement, that just “as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.”⁶ “This verse explains how it is that the Son can exercise divine judgment and generate resurrection life by his powerful word. It is because, like God, he has “life-in-himself,”⁷ He is self-existent. Although we, as merely mortal human beings, have only a derived life that comes from God; Jesus, being one with the Father, has life-in-himself. We find this corroborated in John 1:4 where the author explains that “in Him was life” and also in 1 John in which Jesus is proclaimed as “the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.”⁸ Jesus is not only the Son of God, He is in fact God incarnate. As He says elsewhere in the gospel, “He who has seen me has seen the Father.”⁹

John 4:16-47, NIV

16 So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. 17 In his defense Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.” 18 For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. 19 Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, 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. 20 For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed. 21 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. 22 Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, 23 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. 24 “Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. 25 Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. 26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. 27 And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. 28 “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice 29 and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned. 30 By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

31 “If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. 32 There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is true. 33 “You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth. 34 Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved. 35 John was a lamp that burned and gave light,

4. Carson, D. A. p. 252-253

5. Carson, D. A. p. 253

6. John 5:26 NIV

7. Carson, D.A. p. 256

8. 1 John 1:2 NIV

9. John 14:18 NIV

and you chose for a time to enjoy his light. 36 “I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me. 37 And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, 38 nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. 39 You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me to have life. 41 “I do not accept glory from human beings, 42 but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. 43 I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. 44 How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? 45 “But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. 46 If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. 47 But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?”

Study Questions:

1. Why were the Jewish religious leaders so incensed by Jesus’ claims?
2. Why do you think people today, friends or family who are unbelievers, etc. are offended by Jesus’ claims?
3. Identify the For statements in the passage for this week. Example: “For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.” What is Jesus saying to the people He is speaking to?
4. In what ways does Jesus identify Himself with the Father in this passage?
5. Read Luke 7:18-23. What does Jesus say in verse 23?
6. The word for offended (ESV translation) in verse 23 is skandalizo, from which we get our word scandalized. Why might John have been offended or scandalized by Jesus’ response here?
7. The Jews of Jesus’ day knew the Old Testament, or large pieces of it, by heart, at that time they looked to the law, their Scriptures, for life. Why was that wrong? Who is our life?
8. How do we look to the Scriptures, church attendance, or good deeds, for life? Where do we actually find life?
9. Knowledge puffs us up, and can lead us to seek praise for our “understanding” and scholarship from our peers, or even our superiors. Can you describe a time in your life where you heavily depended on the praise or approval of your peers or family for the “knowledge” you have in your area of study or in your religious devotion? What were or currently are the challenges or setbacks that tend to keep you from finding your source of praise and approval in God and God alone?
10. If you struggle with seeking praise from men, how can we help you seek praise from God and turn away from old habits?

Prayer Partner Assignment:

Meeting with a brother or sister from your small group over a meal to get to know one another more and answer a few questions:

- Read John Chapter 5:16-47 again
- How does this passage proclaim Jesus as the Son of God?
- What does this chapter teach us about what the Father is doing?
- What specifically from this chapter challenges you and why?
- What questions or comments do you have for Life Group next week about this chapter? (Make note of them to ask at the beginning of next week’s study)

End your time in prayer for one another if possible and set up another time to meet again outside of small group.