

Message #18

Kurt Hedlund

John

3/18/2018

GOD THE FATHER, GOD THE SON

AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR US

JOHN 5:19-29

I.

Last week in connection with our ongoing study of John's Gospel we considered the early life of Martin Luther. (PROJECTOR ON--- MARTIN LUTHER) I pointed out that he was raised in Germany around 1500 in a religious system that was focused on rules. He tried desperately to earn God's approval but found no rest for his soul. When he was sent to teach the Bible at a new university in Wittenberg, Germany, one of his first assignments was to teach the New Testament Book of Romans. As a result of his study, he suddenly understood that it was by faith alone in Jesus that one could be declared righteous.

About this time Pope Leo sent a representative to Germany to raise money for the construction of St. Peter's Basilica. This guy, Johann Tetzel, sold indulgences. The idea with indulgences was that if people paid money to the church, their loved ones would get time off from purgatory--- this supposed place where people have their sins purged by burning. The idea was disgusting to Martin Luther. It sounded like people were just trying to fleece his flock. He did not see a Biblical basis for indulgences.

So he wrote up 95 theses and sent them to his archbishop and had them fastened to the church door in Wittenberg. These 95 points of contention were largely focused on this issue of indulgences. Luther's intent was to encourage discussion among priests and academics and to get the church to consider changing its perspective on indulgences. Unknown to him, his 95 theses got printed up and spread around. They caused a big stir and got a reaction from the pope in Rome.

The pope sent one of his cardinals to have a meeting with Martin Luther in the southern German city of Augsburg. The pope demanded a retraction. There was a real danger that Martin Luther was going to be branded as a heretic. Heretics in that day were killed by fire. (PROJECTOR OFF)

We saw last Sunday in our study of #5 in the Gospel of John that Jesus healed a lame man on the Sabbath and told him to roll up his mat and go home. That command to carry the mat violated the rules of the religious leaders about the Sabbath. Jesus was likewise faced with a confrontation with the religious establishment in His day. It was beginning to look like He was also going to be branded a heretic.

If we were hoping that Jesus would get off of the hook, we learned last week that Jesus made things even worse because, according to the last part of v. 18, **“...he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.”** That sets Jesus up for the charge of blasphemy and gives the religious establishment grounds for wanting to kill Jesus.

Fortunately for us, this provided Jesus with the opportunity to give perhaps the clearest explanation in the Bible of the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. Such is the description that we have before us in vv. 19-29. This section is marked off by three statements by Jesus that begin “truly, truly.” Some translations have “verily, verily.” We will use those three strong assertions by Jesus to pay attention as the basis for the outline that I will use.

II.

So in vv. 19-23 of #5, which is found on p. 890 in the black Bibles, we find that JESUS AND THE FATHER ARE UNITED. (II. JESUS AND THE FATHER ARE UNITED.) Verse 19 tells us, **“So Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the father does, that the Son does likewise.’”**

The charge is that Jesus is making Himself equal with God. But He does not recant. He cannot. For Jesus has an inherent unity with God the Father. Here he begins to explain something of the nature of that unity. In doing that, He uses imagery that everyone in that time period could understand. For it was usually the case that a son would follow in the career steps of his father. He would do whatever his father did. He would learn by watching his father.

It is inherent in the father-son analogy that the father is the leader in the relationship. Indeed Jesus often indicates that He has come to do His Father’s will. In the famous verse John 3:16 we are told that God sent His Son into the world.

It is also the case in the father-son analogy that both have the same nature. On our level, fathers and sons are both human beings. On the divine level, both Father and Son are God. They share the same divine essence.

Thus v. 19 makes clear that there is a distinction within the Godhead. In the early church there was a heresy called modalism in which its adherents claimed that there was one God who took different modes, or forms. At some times He appears as God the Father; at some times He appears as God the Son; at some times He appears as God the Holy Spirit. This is not the case. We see here that there is within the Godhead at least God the Father and God the Son. It is clear that the Father is the initiator and the Son is the obedient respondent.

Jesus adds in v. 20, **“For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.”** This is an intimate relationship that is based on love. The Greek word here for “love” is *phileo*, rather than *agapao*. At times their meaning overlaps. Love here shows itself in revealing to the Son all that the Father is doing.

Because of the closeness of this relationship (JOHN 14:9), Jesus can explain to His disciple Philip, **“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”** For Jesus displays the character and the will of His Heavenly Father.

Furthermore, the Father will show the Son greater works that will cause even His opponents to marvel. (PROJECTOR OFF) It is not specified here what those greater works are, but we will see Jesus in the Gospels perform even greater miracles. He will raise the dead. Lazarus will come back to life. Then Jesus will be crucified and rise from the dead. His crucifiers will not be able to find His body. This will confound His opponents.

Jesus continues in v. 21, **“For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.”** It was recognized in the Old Testament and among the Jews of Jesus’ day that God had the power to raise the dead. We saw examples of that power in our studies of the prophets Elijah and Elisha a year or so ago.

In Deuteronomy #32 v. 39 (PROJECTOR ON--- DEUTERONOMY 32:39) the Lord declared to the children of Israel shortly before they entered the Promised Land, **“...there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive...”** There is an ancient Jewish prayer which may have been around in Jesus day. (SHEMONEH

ESREH) It goes like this: **“Blessed are You, O Lord... You restore life to the dead... (You) sustain the living with beneficence (and) quicken the dead.”**

So far we have seen Jesus restore the son of the royal official who was said to be at the point of death. We have seen Jesus in this chapter heal the lame man, whose life was certainly improved as a result. The Gospel of Luke describes two incidents where Jesus later raises individuals from the dead. John will describe the raising of Lazarus. The fact that Jesus is involved in these miracles should point Jews to the conclusion that He is God. If they believe their own theology that restoration to life is a power possessed by God alone, then they need to believe in Jesus. These miracles should also support the conclusion that His claims about providing eternal life are true. (PROJECTOR OFF)

Back in v. 22 of our text we read, **“The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son.”** The Jews recognized that God alone was the ultimate Judge. Now Jesus is claiming that the Father has given all judgment to Himself. This is a further claim to deity and a claim to be in a position to be Judge of the religious establishment. It is sure to outrage His opponents who have closed their minds to the possibility that Jesus really is God.

Back in #3 v. 17 it was said that Jesus did not come into the world to judge the world. That is true in the sense that His primary mission in the Incarnation was to provide redemption for mankind. He came to die for the sins of the world so that people might have eternal life. But eventually He will be judge of humanity.

Then in v. 23 Jesus adds, **“...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.”** Here we have more evidence that Jesus is claiming to be God. For to have the same kind of honor as the Father is a claim to deity.

Keep in mind that this is all stoking the anger of His opponents who are hearing this. What do you suppose John and the other disciples were thinking when they witnessed Jesus saying these things to the religious leaders? Do you think that some of them were tempted to pull Jesus aside and urge Him to tone down His rhetoric? Do you think that they wanted to warn Him that this talk could lead to big trouble?

Martin Luther had no clue that he was stirring up big trouble when he wrote his 95 theses. He had no intention that they be spread all over Germany and put into print. But they were. The indulgence seller

Johann Tetzel saw them and published a response to them. He complained to the Vatican. Other religious leaders in Germany began to take sides. Luther did have some defenders. But the religious establishment was against him.

Martin Luther was fearful during his twelve day walk to meet the pope's representative in Augsburg. Cardinal Catejan had strict instructions from Rome to demand that Luther recant his views on indulgences. Luther sought to be respectful to the religious bureaucracy. He assured the Cardinal that he had no intention to undermine the authority of the church or of Rome. He simply wanted an explanation for the Biblical basis for the church's views on indulgences. Cardinal Catejan could not come up with one. There was interaction back forth over a period of several days. Finally, Luther's friends took him out of Augsburg one night, put him on a horse and sent him back to Wittenberg before he could be arrested and sent to Rome. A final confrontation with the religious establishment was postponed.

III.

Likewise, Jesus' confrontation with the religious establishment in Jerusalem was to be postponed for a time. But in our passage He continued His address to the religious leaders. In v. 24 Jesus expressed another "truly, truly." In this verse He says that ETERNAL LIFE IS DEPENDENT ON BELIEVING THIS UNITY. (PROJECTOR ON--- III. ETERNAL LIFE IS DEPENDENT...)

Jesus declares in v. 24, **"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."** Many people in our world say that they believe in God and think that this belief in God is sufficient to get them to heaven. But in vv. 19-23 Jesus declared that He is part of the Godhead. He is united with God the Father. True belief in God must include faith in Jesus. The Father has given ultimate judgment into the hands of His Son. So people better be right with Jesus.

The responsibility to hear the word of Jesus means more than just a mental understanding. It implies a belief and trust in the message that He has presented. It includes a recognition that He has been sent by God the Father. It includes the message that he presented to the rabbi Nicodemus in #3 that entrance into the kingdom of heaven requires a spiritual rebirth. It includes the message that was described in #3 v. 16: **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."**

In v. 24 in our passage Jesus indicates that this belief in Jesus provides eternal life as a present possession. We who believe also do not come into judgment. The last phrase implies that the judgment in view here is a condemnation kind of judgment. The one who believes no longer has to be concerned about a condemnation to death.

These words of Jesus must have been part of the basis of the theology that the Apostle John expressed in his First Epistle. In #5 of 1 John (1 JOHN 5:11-12) he wrote, **“And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. (1 JOHN 5:13) I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.”** We can know that we have eternal life now--- not because of any goodness in us, not because of any good work that we have done. Eternal life can be a present possession if we have believed in Jesus.

Four hundred years after the time of Martin Luther a little girl was born in a small burg a few miles south of Augsburg. Michael and Elizabeth Weggenmann named their daughter Maximilliana. Maxi's dad passed away when she was still a small girl. Her mother supported the small family by running a little spa in this country village. She saw to it that Maxi got an education, which included learning English. When WW II came along, Maxi was drafted into the Luftwaffe. She became a teletype operator. After the war the American army put Maxi into their employment because of her English skills. She worked for an American army captain. When he returned to the States, she followed Doug and the two of them were married.

They moved from Georgia to California where together they ran a couple of gas stations. When they retired, they moved to Boulder City. Doug passed away a few years later. Fifteen years ago the Hedlunds moved in across the street.

Maxi was a tough lady. She came from a Catholic background and was very wary of the Baptist pastor in the neighborhood. She was an independent woman. But she became frail in her later years, and she had no relatives in the country. She had turned off a number of her former friends because of her abrasive personality. Finally she let me take out the recycling for her each week. We developed a bit of a relationship. On one occasion Suzy and I took her to the hospital when she fell ill.

Then I had the opportunity to begin to talk about Jesus. The passage that I spoke to her about a number of times was 1 John #5 vv. 11-13. She began to have dementia problems, and it was sometimes tough to communicate these spiritual truths. But at one point she assured me that she did have Jesus in her life.

Hopefully that is the case, and I will see her again in heaven some day. In 2015 I led her funeral service down at the Veterans' Cemetery, where she was buried next to her husband. The promise of these verses is available to each one of us today.

IV.

In vv. 25-29 in our passage we find that BELIEVING THIS MESSAGE PRODUCES CONFIDENCE IN THE FACE OF THE COMING RESURRECTION. (IV. BELIEVING THIS MESSAGE PRODUCES...) Verse 25 begins with another "truly, truly:" **"Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live."**

This is only one of three times in John's Gospel when Jesus is quoted as referring to Himself as the Son of God. Usually He refers to Himself as the Son of Man. That was less likely to provoke a negative reaction, because it could be understood as a term simply stressing His humanity. But "Son of God" had more obvious implications as a claim to deity.

Given the fact that v. 24 speaks of having eternal life as a result of faith in Christ and passing from death to life, it seems to me that it is more likely that v. 25 is referring to the spiritually dead who hear the voice of the Son of God. Believing is implied in this hearing. Some in Jesus' audiences are responding to His message and believing in Jesus and coming to have eternal life.

Verse 26: **"For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself."** Self-existence is a fundamental characteristic of God. Every other creature in the universe is dependent upon God. Jesus is continuing to claim to be God before His opponents.

This granting of life in Himself did not happen in the incarnation. It did not happen when Jesus was born into humanity. It was something that was granted in eternity past. Theologians sometimes refer to it as the eternal generation of the Son.

Verse 27: **"And he [the Father] has given him [the Son] authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man."** Jesus Christ is the ultimate Judge. Belief in God without belief in Jesus Christ is ignoring the one who will ultimately judge us all. He will be Judge one day of the Jewish religious leaders who were confronting Him.

The basis of this authority for Christ to act as Judge is related to His position as "Son of Man." The primary reference here may be to a passage in the Old Testament in Daniel #7. The Jewish statesman (DANIEL 7:13) living in Babylon has a vision that goes like this: **"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. (DANIEL 7:14) And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."** As king of this future kingdom, Jesus Christ has authority to judge all human beings.

There may be a secondary meaning to this title "Son of Man" relating to His authority to judge in that the Son of God has experienced what it means to be a human being. (PROJECTOR OFF) He has authority to judge not only because He is God but also because He is a human being who has experienced firsthand what it is to live as a man upon this earth.

Then in vv. 28 & 29 we read, **"Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment."** If we only had this verse to determine how it is that people go to heaven, we might conclude that it is the goodness of our lives that determine whether we obtain eternal life. But the Apostle John has stressed numerous times that it is faith in Jesus that is the key. He has stressed that in v. 24 in our passage. He stresses that in the famous verse John 3:16, which we mentioned earlier. He stresses it in the purpose statement of the book in #20 vv. 30 & 31.

The Apostle John is fond of absolute contrasts. He notes the comments that Jesus makes which point toward this dualism. Thus in John's Gospel and in his Epistles he argues that people are either in the light or in the darkness. They are either for Jesus or against Him. They either have eternal life, or they do not have eternal life. They are either sinners or not sinners. They either believe, or they do not believe. So here either people have done good, or they have done evil. If we were to parse things more closely, John would acknowledge that Christians sometimes sin, and evil people sometimes do good things. But it is whether we have believed in Jesus or not that determines whether our lives will be characterized as good or evil.

We also find in vv. 28 & 29 a reference to two resurrections--- a resurrection of life and a resurrection of judgment. All people will experience a resurrection from the dead, but two entirely different destinations will be involved. The resurrection of life will involve no judgment, at least in terms of a condemnation judgment. (PROJECTOR ON--- ROMANS 8:1) In Romans #8 v. 1 the Apostle Paul gives

Christians this assurance: **“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”** We never have to worry about being condemned by God if we have trusted in Jesus.

A more detailed description of this resurrection is provided for us in 1 Thessalonians #4. (1 THESSALONIANS 4:13) Beginning in v. 13 the Apostle Paul writes, **“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others who have no hope. (1 THESSALONIANS 4:14) For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. (1 THESSALONIANS 4:15) For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. (1 THESSALONIANS 4:16) For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (1 THESSALONIANS 4:17-18) Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”** This resurrection is often referred to as the rapture of the church.

While Christians no longer need to be concerned about a judgment of condemnation, the New Testament does speak about a judgment of rewards. The Apostle Paul calls it the judgment seat of Christ. We will be given rewards, according to the faithfulness of our deeds. This is described in 1 Corinthians #3.

(1 CORINTHIANS 3:11) Beginning in v. 11 we read these words of the Apostle Paul: **“For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 CORINTHIANS 3:12) Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw--- (1 CORINTHIANS 3:13) each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. (1 CORINTHIANS 3:14) If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. (1 CORINTHIANS 3:15) If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.”** The criminal on the cross who expressed faith in Jesus shortly before his death will not have a lot of good works in his life by which he can be rewarded. But Jesus promised him that he would be in Paradise with Jesus on that same day.

Verses 28 & 29 promise that there will also be a resurrection from the dead for unbelievers. The judgment that awaits them will be much different. It is described for us at the end of the Book of Revelation. Beginning in Revelation #20 v. 11 we are told (REVELATION 20:11) about this in a vision that the Apostle John had of the future: **“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. ---**

By what Jesus said in our passage we know that this is indeed Jesus Christ.--- **From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. (REVELATION 20:12) And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. (REVELATION 20:13) And the sea gave up the dead who were in it. Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. (REVELATION 20:14) Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (REVELATION 20:15) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."** The deeds of these people will vary. It is implied that there will be degrees of punishment. But all of those who are part of this great white throne judgment will end up in the lake of fire, which will not be pleasant for anyone.

If we have trusted in Jesus, we do not have to worry about this. Believing this message should produce confidence in us in the face of this coming resurrection from the dead. (PROJECTOR OFF) My 92 year old mother had surgery this past week. The surgeon was expecting to remove a cyst and repair a tear in her intestines. Instead he found cancer throughout the lower part of her body. He sewed her back up. My mother chose not to have further treatment. So she has just a short time to live. Rob and Suzy and I are headed to Wisconsin on Tuesday to see her.

Because my mom is a follower of Jesus, we will encourage her with these kinds of words of hope that she has about the future. They are promises that can encourage all of us as the deadline of our lives looms ever closer. How important it is that we all make sure that we have put our trust in the Son of God who is united with God the Father.