



Text: John 5:19-29<sup>1</sup>

Series: *Life in His Name* – The Message of John’s Gospel

Title: The Father, the Son & the Gift of Life

Date: January 16, 2011

Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

God is a worker. God is not sitting in some celestial easy chair observing the flow of history. God has not completed his work and gone on vacation. God has not retired. The God of the Bible is a working God. The very first chapter of the Bible finds him at work. The act of creating the physical universe is called his work and the Bible tells us that when the work was complete that ...

**“God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.” Genesis 2:3**

But he didn’t rest for very long, because with the entrance of sin into the world came the need for his great work of salvation. When his people Israel were in slavery in Egypt he went to work to bring them out of Egypt and into a land he had designed for them. Many years later, the psalmist Jeduthun reflected on God’s act of redeeming Israel from slavery in Egypt and he wrote...

**“I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds.”  
Psalm 77:11-12**

And in a word spoke through the prophet Isaiah, God himself speaks of his work of creation and salvation in one breath together with his work in directing all of human history. In this prophecy, spoken through Isaiah, God speaks of a king he would raise up by the name of Cyrus, a man whom he would use to set his people free from slavery once again.

**“Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed [Cyrus]: ‘Ask me of things to come; will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands? I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host. I have stirred him up in righteousness, and I will make all his ways level; he shall build my city and set my exiles free, not for price or reward, says the LORD of hosts.’” Isaiah 45:11-13**

Our God is a relentless worker! And so when Jesus declared,

**“My Father is working until now, and I am working.” John 5:17**

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission, All rights reserved.



his listeners clearly understood that Jesus was...

**“making himself equal with God.” John 5:18**

They were shocked by his claim; you might be, too. Many people are willing to accept Jesus as a great teacher or a compelling moral example. But Jesus' claim is that he is much more than that. They wanted to kill him because they thought he was insulting the character of God; but he wasn't. Jesus was telling them the truth.

Jesus was not claiming to be a rival to the Father. Jesus wasn't saying that he had an equal claim to deity as a rival to God the Father. Jesus was saying that he was equal with the Father in deity and in union with the Father in deity. You can see that in his explanation of his claim to equality and we find his explanation in John chapter 5, verses nineteen to twenty nine. This is God's holy, inspired and authoritative Word. As I read it for us this morning let's receive it as His gift to us. Let's hear it with thanks and let's respond to it with living faith. This is Jesus' defence of his claim to equality with God.

**<sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. <sup>22</sup> The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> 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.**

**<sup>25</sup> “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. <sup>26</sup> For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. <sup>27</sup> And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. <sup>28</sup> Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice <sup>29</sup> and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.**

These claims that Jesus makes are astounding! He could not have been a great moral teacher and make these claims unless they are true. If they are lies, then Jesus would be liar, not a moral teacher. And if these claims are not true, he could be worse than a liar; he could be a mad man whose mind was divorced from reality or he could even be something truly evil, a deceiver intent on drawing



humanity away from the worship of the true God. As C.S. Lewis summarized the situation:

***Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God.<sup>2</sup>***

These are Christ's claims to equality with God. I invite you to make your decision. This morning I'm borrowing a great message on this passage given by Kent Hughes. Hughes was the former pastor of Wheaton Bible Church and is one of my favourite Bible teachers. I would highly recommend his commentary on John's Gospel to you for your own personal study.<sup>3</sup>

Let's look at...

***Christ's First Claim to Equality with God...  
One with the Father in His Work***

*Jesus prefaced that first claim with "Truly, truly," or as the NIV has it "I tell you the truth" or "Verily, verily" as the KJV renders it. What the expression means is "without fear of contradiction." Jesus was saying: "You must hear and accept what I have to say."*

***"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. 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." John 5:19-20***

*Unity of action with God the Father is the first great claim of Christ. Some of the Jews shuddered at the thought, because in this declaration they understood that Jesus was claiming equality with God! Equality is the inevitable result of unity of action. The Father and the Son are so closely related that one wonders how some people can deny that Christ claimed to be equal with God the Father. But they do.*

*In his autobiography, Donahue, the celebrated talk-show host Phil Donahue explains why he left the faith...*

*If God the Father is so all-loving, why didn't he come down and go to Calvary? Then Jesus could have said "This is my Father in whom I am well pleased." ...*

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<sup>2</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan, 1952), 41.

<sup>3</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *John : That You May Believe*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1999)



*How could an all-knowing, all-loving God allow his Son to be murdered on a cross in order that he might redeem my sins?<sup>2</sup>*

*Donahue's indictment of God's love comes from ignorance of the Scriptures. You see, when Jesus claimed unity of action with the Father he made the Father a participant in Jesus' sacrifice, pain, and love. As verse 19 says,*

**“the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing.”**

Donahue's mistake is made today by people who accuse the Father of a form of “divine child abuse” in sending his Son to the cross to bear his wrath for our sin. What those people miss is significance of Jesus declaration of unity of action with the Father. Jesus and the Father are in sync in everything they do. The cross was not the Father's will inflicted upon an unwilling Son. The cross was the will of the Father AND the Son. Jesus did nothing alone!

*Jesus' claim to equality with the Father demands that we see two hearts beating as one. That is a beautiful thought, and the opening words of verse 20 take us into the inner workings of this oneness:*

**“For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing.”**

*The word translated “loves” here is not the expected word, agape, normally used to describe divine love. Rather, it is the term for friendship love, phileo. From our human level we understand this as a personal love between friends who delight in sharing everything. Jesus is a separate person, he has power to act on his own, but by virtue of the love and identity within the Godhead, he does no work that the Father does not also do.*

*So in essence in verse 20 Jesus is saying, “**Remember the great teaching of God in the Old Testament—I am the incarnation of that God who opened the Red Sea and saved Israel from slavery; I am the physical embodiment of the God who created the heavens and the earth; I am the exact expression of the God whose hand directs the course of human history.**” Those who were with Christ saw the Father. They saw the Father's smile. They heard the Father's teaching. They observed the Father's tender touch and trembled before his wrath. If we want to see what the Father does, all we have to do is look at Christ.*

*That is the answer to Donahue's question. In Jesus Christ we see the likeness of God the Father.*

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<sup>2</sup> Phil Donahue, *Donahue* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), p. 94.



*The monumental claim that Jesus sets before us is that he is equal with the Father. Even if we have already embraced this truth, we must repeatedly affirm it. We must daily appropriate the reality that Jesus is God! He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. That must be a constant reality in our lives. We as believers must affirm who Jesus Christ is. He is supreme.*

*To those who don't believe he comes with the same claim -- that he is King of kings and Lord of lords -- and he will assert that claim for all time and eternity. Jesus' claim continually confronts all mankind, and it demands a response. Who do you respond?*

*Let's consider Christ's second claim...*

**Christ's Second Claim to Equality with God...  
The Power to Give Life**

**“For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will ... 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. “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. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.” John 5:21, 24-26**

*To his shocked hearers, Christ not only claimed equality and identity of action with God, but he claimed to be able to give life. “An hour is coming, and is now here,” Jesus said, “when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.”*

And Jesus could back up his claim. All Jesus had to do was point to the man he had just healed (John 5:1-12). The man had been paralyzed for thirty eight years and Jesus had healed him with just one word: “Rise.” (John 5:8) The ESV translates the word as “Get up” but in the language originally spoken by Jesus it was only one word. And it's the same word that Jesus will one day speak over the graves of every one who has every died: “Rise!” Those who have believed in him will rise to eternal life; but sadly, those who have not believed will rise to eternal judgment.

The man Jesus healed had been as good as dead to his family and friends, but Jesus gave him life with his word.

Kent Hughes shares his story of the day when, as a twelve year old, he heard the voice of Jesus. He wrote...



*About forty-five years ago an eighth grade boy went to church camp. He was dead in his trespasses and sins. That boy was Kent Hughes. I had been raised in the church, and although I was spiritually unregenerated, I was fascinated with the church. Perhaps because of the beautiful building with stained-glass windows—I can remember looking at those windows and being attracted by the mystery of life they suggested. I loved my red-letter Bible, too, and treated it reverently. Also, the [church] jargon was mysterious and inviting to me. I have never been able to define just what the attraction was, but I was intrigued by spiritual things. And yet, even as a twelve-year-old, I knew I was on the outside, and I wanted to be inside, whatever the inside was.*

*Finally I was coerced into going to a church camp. For the first time I heard clearly what it means to be a Christian, and I asked Christ into my life. I wept a great puddle of tears on the floor. You would have thought I had committed every sin that could possibly be committed! I had not, but I knew I was a sinner. That night I was marvelously born again. I still have that little Bible, and I know which verses I marked inside that Bible as I lay inside my sleeping bag, using a flashlight late into the night. That little Bible had suddenly come alive for me! I felt free, my sins were gone, and I had purpose in life. I even felt the call to be a minister! Christ had given me life. That is exactly what he was talking about when he said, “An hour ... is now here when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.”*

*...Hughes’s conversion experience is not normative for everyone. Those who receive Christ have wonderfully varied experiences...*

*Years ago the great G. Campbell Morgan was preaching in Tennessee. During the sermon he stated, “By no means can every Christian remember the time when he was born again.” At the end of the sermon someone challenged his statement. Morgan turned to him and asked the man, “Are you alive?” The man said, “Why, of course I am!” Morgan said, “Do you remember when you were born?” The man said, “No, but I know I am living.” Morgan replied, “Exactly. Some Christians may not remember the moment of their new birth. But they are spiritually alive and know it and that is what counts.” You can know you have eternal life. When the dead hear the voice of Christ, they enter into that relationship of life.*

*The new birth is a great mystery, but the process is very simple. **“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. (v.24)***

*The process is simply “hear and believe.” What do you need to “hear”? What do you need to “believe”? Here’s the content of “hear and believe” according to the Apostle Paul:*



**“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.” Romans 10:9-10**

*The process is simple. Christ claims to be able to give life. Verse 24 ends with this enticing thought: “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.” The tenses of the verbs indicate that when a man enters into this process, it remains his. **Jesus did not say** that those who hear and believe “WILL PASS from death to life.” Jesus said that those who hear and believe “HAVE PASSED from death to life.” The moment we “hear and believe” the deal is done! Life is ours!*

Hughes testimony is also my testimony, and I’m sure many of you share a similar story. I came to Christ as an eight year old, led to faith in Christ in my backyard by a summer children’s worker who shared God’s Word with me. In my teen years I wavered in my faith a bit, but Christ had given me life. That fact never changed because **Christ** had given me life. When I heard and believed the Gospel Jesus moved me from death to life. My confidence is not in me; it’s in Christ’s word about what he has done in me.

*Such are the results of the staggering claim that Christ makes. Sometimes when Christians repeat that claim, they are accused of being narrow and exclusive. But they are speaking the truth. Christ made a very exclusive statement when he said,*

**“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6**

*That is the way it is. But at the same time Christ is infinitely open-hearted and accepting because the opportunity is for everyone, the process is simple, and the benefits are eternal. All may come to him.*

*Finally, let’s consider...*

***Christ’s Third Claim to Equality with God...  
The Authority to Judge***

**“And [the Father] has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. 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.” John 5:27-29**



In Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians there is a beautiful passage that describes that "hour" in this manner...

**“Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.” 1 Corinthians 15:51-52**

*In imitation of that great "hour" a bugler could stand at the edge of a graveyard and play reveille, but nothing would happen. He could travel to every graveyard, in every community, in every nation of the world. No matter how well or loudly he played, nothing would happen. The dead need a far greater authority to bring them to life, and that authority is the voice of Jesus Christ.*

**“An hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice.”  
John 5:28**

*It is not going to be the Father's voice or the Holy Spirit's voice but Christ's voice that will call believers and unbelievers to resurrection. Maybe he will use music too. First Corinthians 15:52 speaks of "the last trumpet." What will happen after he calls us to come forth? Will it be like Ezekiel's valley of dry bones, with bones rattling together and sprouting sinew and skin? I have no idea, but I do know this—according to 1 Corinthians 15, we will receive new, "imperishable" bodies. We will experience the fullness of what we have only tasted here on earth.*

As I mentioned last week, C.S. Lewis' children's series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, have become popular again through their film adaptations, one of which, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, is currently in the theatres.

If you're not familiar with Lewis' stories, you need to know that they feature a lion named Aslan, who plays a Christ-like role throughout the books, and three children named Lucy, Edmund and Peter.

The last book in the Chronicles series is entitled, *The Last Battle*. *At the end of that final book, Aslan, tells Lucy, Edmund and Peter that there has been a railroad accident and they are dead. Lewis wrote...*

*And as [Aslan] spoke he no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.*



*The same is true for us if we believe in Christ as our Savior. The authority of the voice of Christ will call us from our graves and out of our perishable bodies to a new life of which life on earth is only the beginning chapter. Christ has made this claim, and he speaks truth.*

*Jesus also declares that...*

**“[the Father] has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.” John 5:27**

*In this statement Jesus reached back to Daniel chapter seven, verse thirteen, and the term “son of man” used there and identified himself with it. That title is beautiful and gracious in its context in Daniel, where the destruction of the inhuman empires of the world is followed by the coming of a “son of man” who sets up a humane, gentle, and graceful government. Jesus uses the term to tell believers that the one who comes in judgment is “the Son of Man.”*

*And yet those qualities that make him so precious to those who believe are the very qualities that make him frightening to those who do not believe. At the Great White Throne (Rev 20:11) unbelievers will find themselves looking into the face of one to whom they are completely accountable, and nothing will slip by him. The same qualities that make Christ such a comfort for believers will make him an awesome terror to the lost.*

**“The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son...” John 5:22**

The very One who died for them will be the One who judges those who rejected him. Imagine that dreadful moment as those who have rejected Jesus stand before the One whose hands and side bear the scars that could have spelled life for them. But instead, those wounds are an unanswerable testimony to the death that they will die for their sin because they did not believe in the One who died for them.

*Our Savior claims, “I have identity of action with the Father, I have the power to give life, and I have the authority to judge.” These claims are eternal, and they call for action.*

**“...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.” John 5:23**

Let's bring these claims of Jesus home to our own hearts. I invite you to bow your heads and, in the privacy of your own heart and mind, ask you to honestly answer these questions:

Do you “honor” the Son?



Have you “heard and believed” Him?  
Have you confessed him as Lord and God?  
Have you “passed from death to life”?  
Have you begun to live “the Great Story ... in which every chapter is better than the one before”?

- **Invitation to Prayer Ministry**
- **Final Song:** In Christ Alone
- **Benediction**