

**John 5:16-30**  
**(Jeremiah 31:31-34; Romans 7:21-8:11)**  
**“Like Father, Like Son”**

**Introduction**

These are critical times, perhaps epoch-changing times, we are living in. We are living on borrowed money, for the first time in our history fighting a war on borrowed money, and facing the possible collapse of our financial system. Christian foundations that have poured hundreds of millions of dollars into the expansion of the Church around the world are turning off the tap, waiting to see what will become of the value of their portfolios, not wanting irresponsibly to sell stock at fire-sale prices. Many Christians are giving way to anxiety and closing their wallets until they have a better picture of what is coming.

I think God has us right where he wants us! It is an exciting time to be a Christian in a world where the false ground of security – on which too many of us have built our lives and planned our futures – is being shaken. What an opportunity to learn to trust and even to rejoice in our great God and King who rules over all and who never asks of us what we do not have, but who expects us to continue to respond in faithfulness to the mission he has entrusted to us, the mission of extending his kingdom to every people group on earth. These are days that reveal what we really value, what we really worship, what is the true ground of our confidence and hope. Are we really the people of God that we have claimed to be? These days will reveal the truth. So it is extremely important that we be clear about who Jesus is, and why we declare him to be, not only the Messiah of Israel, but the Savior of the world. Our text gives us just the help we need in sorting this out.

Let me begin by reminding you that this text describes an in-house argument in which all the players are Jewish. We will miss the prophetic torque of this text if we forget that these Jewish religious leaders, whom John simply refers to as “the Jews,” were the conservative evangelicals of their day. Like us, they believed the Scriptures to be God’s Word written, and sought to understand, believe and obey that Word. They loved God’s law and so they cared deeply about keeping the Sabbath. When Jesus did things that they had been taught were wrong to do on the Sabbath, they were offended at the thought of an influential Jewish rabbi breaking the Sabbath. They sought to honor God and so they were offended at anything they considered to be blasphemous. What could be more blasphemous than speaking in a way that implied equality with God? When they heard Jesus speak of his unique relationship with his heavenly Father, the God of Israel, they understood his words as blasphemous, and the law was clear: Blasphemers were to be put to death out of honor for God and concern for the spiritual health of God’s people.

Reading these texts from our context as believers in Jesus, it is too easy for us to fail to appreciate the radical nature of Jesus ministry and of the claims that he made for himself, and so to fail to understand the depth and violence of the reaction of those religious leaders who saw him as a law-breaker and blasphemer, one who from their perspective was leading God’s people into paths of judgment and death. In fact, as the Oxford scholar

and Christian writer, C.S. Lewis, often pointed out in debate, Jesus did not leave us with the option of dismissing him as merely a good man, a charismatic first-century rabbi, but not the Messiah, not the Savior of the world, not the Son of God. By claiming these things of himself, he left us with only three options: either he was delusional and worthy of our pity, or he was a charlatan and worthy of our contempt, or he was everything he claimed to be, and worthy of our worship.

So this morning, I would invite you to note six lessons found in our text that will help clarify for us what was Jesus' own understanding of his identity and of the ministry entrusted to him.

## **Body**

- 1. We see, first, the humility of Jesus in answering his accusers. Rather than claiming equality with the Father, he speaks instead of unity with the Father through utter dependence upon the Father: “The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing” (5:19a).**
- 2. We see, secondly, the radical obedience of the Son to the Father: “For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise” (5:19b).**
- 3. We see, thirdly, the Father’s love for the Son: “For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing” (5:20).**
- 4. We see, fourthly, the two essential and interconnected ministries the Father has entrusted to the Son: The ministry of giving life and the ministry of pronouncing judgment (5:21-22).**
- 5. We see, fifthly, the way that the Son exercises those ministries: Through his Word (5:24,25&28).**
- 6. We see, finally, God’s aim in all this: The Son receives the praise, honor and glory due to God alone, and those who honor the Son by believing his Word and obeying his voice receive eternal life (5:23-29).**

## **Conclusion**

What are we to make of all this? What should be our response? This text demands a response: either we must reject Jesus outright as tragically confused or intentionally misleading, or we must deal with the implications of his majestic and sweeping claims. He is either not worthy of our time, or he is worthy of all our days, of all that we have and all that we are, given to him. Will you, in these uncertain times, give yourself to him who is the Lord of history, Israel’s Messiah and the Savior of the world? You could make no wiser investment than in the one unshakable kingdom that will never end.

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