

Jesus the Life Giver

John 5:16-30

Warm-up Question: What traits or habits have you picked up from watching your father or mother?

¹⁶ So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. ¹⁷ Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.” ¹⁸ For this reason the Jews tried all the harder 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: “I tell you the truth, 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, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. 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. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. ²⁴ “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. ²⁵ I tell you the truth, 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 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 good will rise to live, and those who have done 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. (John 5:17-30).

The Godly Shall Be Persecuted

I married Sandy, my American wife, in 1980. After complications on my visa application due to my being honest about two minor marijuana convictions in 1971 and 1976, we left the United States desiring that God would use us in England. We didn’t get a lawyer or anything to stay and fight against the rejection of my Resident Visa; we just took it that God wanted us in England.

We had it on our hearts to serve the Lord in any way He should open up for us. We returned to my home town of Harwich, in Essex, England, and within a year began church planting with a couple of good friends who also lived in Harwich. We learned how to share our faith in a relational setting, and also how to open up conversation on the streets, in coffee bars, and all kinds of places and situations. My home town of Harwich had the busiest harbor on the whole of the East Coast of England, with more ships sailing to and fro from Harwich harbor than any other harbor in England. One harbor served five different ports situation on both sides of the harbor and up the two rivers from Harwich. Hundreds of people would arrive daily from different ports in Europe. The one place they wanted to go was London via the trains. Very rarely did people want to visit Harwich; after all it was a small town of only sixteen thousand people. The ship from the Hook of Holland would berth around 6:30 A.M. and the people would disembark around 7:00 A.M. and would sit on the Boat Train that would leave sharp at 8:00 A.M. Sandy and I would go on the train and work along the train, giving out salvation tracts and talking to people about Christ. We often had very encouraging conversations, but also some antagonism as well. One day we had a phone call from a lady that wanted to talk to us about a gospel tract that her son had received as he got on the train to go up to London that day. This person lived in Harwich. I knew something was up when the lady wouldn’t even invite us into her house. She sat us down on the grass garden in front of her house and tore into us for sharing the gospel with her son who she was hoping would become a Jehovah Witness just like herself. This lady did not like the fact that we were witnessing to the facts of the gospel and telling her son that Jesus is the divine Son of God, the long promised Messiah of Israel, and the only one that can give her son true life. She lost her temper as she tore into us outside her house on the grass. We tried to gently share with her what the scriptures say, but she had been so blinded by her religious teachers that she was no longer open to reading anything other than her JW bible and the mistranslations that were therein.

In this passage we are studying today, the Jewish religious police of the day did not like the fact of Jesus healing the invalid man at the Pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath. Healing was considered work by the religious Jews. Not only that but Jesus had also told the man to pick up his mat and walk (John 5:8), which was another act that was considered work (John 5:10). The only person that was considered to be able to work on the Sabbath was God! He could not take a day off because the universe still needed His sustaining power. Jesus was not intimidated by these men attacking Him because He did a good act. Courageously He faced them down and told them; “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working” (verse 17). These words enraged them even more because of two reasons: 1) He was calling God His personal Father in an exclusive sense. He didn’t say “Our Father,” but “My Father.” 2) To say that He was working in tandem with His Father was tantamount to saying He was God, and of course, He is! He was just telling them the truth in a wonderfully courageous way. He knew that to say those words was to invite persecution and anger, but His attitude was to speak the truth and let the chips fall where they may. He would not shy away from stating His mission—to do the Father’s will completely.

Jesus said that those who are godly shall be persecuted:

Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you (John 15:20).

There is often a clash of kingdoms when the Spirit of God is moving. Do not be surprised at this. Satan, the enemy of the kingdom of God, will not take it lying down when his kingdom is being plundered and he is losing people who are seeing Jesus and learning of His power to save and deliver. Often there is a reaction—the Spirit of this world will respond using people we never would suspect of being tools of the evil one. Even Peter, the disciple of Jesus, without realizing it, became a mouthpiece of Satan to try to dissuade Jesus from going to the cross (Matthew 16:22-23). Remember though, that people are never our enemy (Ephesians 6:12), only the spirit that uses them to retaliate against the moving of the Spirit of God (Ephesians 2:2).

Have you ever had friends, family or others try to talk you out of your faith? Have you ever had opposition

and had to take a stand for your faith? Share briefly with one another what happened.

The Secret of His Power

Last session, when we talked about the healing at the Pool of Bethesda, we elaborated on Paul’s teaching to the church at Philippi (Philippians 2:7) that Jesus emptied Himself and became nothing when He took human form. In other words, Jesus did not heal by His own power as God; He was completely reliant on the Spirit’s power to work through Him. Here in this passage we find the secret of His power, “I tell you the truth, 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” (verse 19). This must be the question that we as Christians should continually ask in each and every situation we face, “Lord, what do you want to do through me in this situation? What do you want me to say to this person?” Sometimes we might fall flat on our faces, because we have said or done something that we thought the Lord was saying, yet nothing happened. Yet we must trust the results to God and be obedient to the leading of the Spirit. The more we learn to be sensitive to His voice and leading, the more we will see Him at work through us. We must listen for that gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:12) of the Spirit that becomes clearer the longer we walk with Him and are obedient to His voice. Remember that the whisper of the Spirit never contradicts the Word of God and always seems like something that the Spirit of Jesus would say. Jesus said this relationship between the Father and Son operates out of love for one another, 20For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does (verse 20). When a person is truly in love with God, the gifts of the Spirit will flow in him and through him to touch lives.

Why did Jesus deliberately face down His accusers and speak such inflaming words that He knew would provoke their anger?

There are some people that say that Jesus never said that He was and is God. I don’t know where they get that notion because just in this passage of scripture alone, Jesus is stating very clearly who He is. The religious Jews certainly understood Him to be saying that He is equal with God. For that reason they were now trying even harder to kill Him (verse 18). Jesus stated very boldly to their faces five claims of equality with God:

1. He is equal with God in His person (verses 17 and

- 18).
2. He is equal with God in His works (verses 19 and 20).
 3. He is equal with God in His being a giver of life (verse 21).
 4. He is equal with God in His judgement (verse 22).
 5. He is equal with God in His honor (verse 23).

We don't have time to look in detail at all of these claims but let's take a good look at Jesus' claim to be the Life Giver.

The Son is Equal with God in Being the Giver of Life

When I was a child in Primary school (ages 7-11) I remember walking the four or five hundred yards to school. On the way I used to pass the Salvation Army chapel. Written on a poster on the side of the building were the words, "Are you really alive?" There was no explanation to the statement and it seemed so ridiculous to me as a child. I had to be alive to read it! What was the point of the statement? To me it showed how ridiculous Christians could be. When I later became a Christian and began reading the scriptures, I finally realized that without an experience of being given life by the Lord, we are dead in our sins and devoid of the life of God. Paul, in writing to the Church at Ephesus, stated that when I was following the ways of this world and living for myself, I was dead:

¹ As for you, **you were dead in your transgressions and sins**, ² in which you used to live **when you followed the ways of this world** and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient (Ephesians 2:1-2).

Now I understood the message of the Salvation Army! In a few verses later, the passage goes on to state that God made us alive because of His mercy, whereas our spirit, that part of our inner makeup that is able to connect with God, was dead until Christ came into our lives. The scriptures make it clear that man in his makeup is comprised of body, soul and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Paul says:

"because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ **made us alive** with Christ even when **we were dead** in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. . . . ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the **gift of God**—⁹ **not by works**, so that no one can boast.

(Ephesians 2:5, 8-9).

Notice how this Life that is imparted from God comes to us—it is given as a gift of grace. What does the word grace mean? Grace is a word that means undeserved favor. It means that there is nothing you can do to earn it; it is a gift of life that is given to you upon believing and trusting in the work of Christ on the cross for you and as you. Jesus said in another place, ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; **I have come that they may have life**, and have it to the full (John 10:10). Jesus came as the life giver. You received life from your mother when you were born, but that inner part of you that connects with God, the spirit of a man, was born dead. To receive this new life, Jesus said to Nicodemus that he had to be born-again:

³ "I tell you the truth, **no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.**" ⁴ "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" ⁵ Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ **Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit** (John 3:3-6).

Jesus is saying that flesh can only give birth to flesh, but if a person wants eternal life, he must come to Jesus and receive a spiritual rebirth, the life of God imparted to him. This life cannot be imparted to a person by going to church, having godly parents, being nice and doing good works, this impartation can only come by coming to Jesus, the life giver:

¹² Yet to all **who received him**, to those who **believed in his name**, he gave the right to **become children of God** (John 1:12).

Have you come to a place in your life where you know that you have experienced new life in Christ? If you have, share with one another the things that you notice you do differently since becoming a Christian.

How Does This Life from God Come to a Person?

Jesus, in the passage we are studying, quite clearly states the qualifications for receiving this impartation of life from God:

²⁴ "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be

condemned; he has crossed over from death to life (John 5:24).

This life impartation comes when a person *hears* God's word. There is something quite powerful about the word of God that we often underestimate. It has been attacked over the centuries and often been shut to the common man, but when the word of God is spoken or read, something inside a man or woman begins happening. The writer to the Hebrew disciples put it this way: For the **word** of God is **living and active**. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). This message is *living and active* when it is spoken under the inspiration of the Spirit to a person's soul. When a person believes that word and places trust in the saving work of Christ, something wonderful happens—the Spirit of God enters in and that person is born-again just as Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3:3. Inherent in the word believe is also that of repentance. One cannot believe, in the biblical sense of the word, without changing one's life course toward seeking to please God from the point that one believes. When a person fulfills the qualifications of believing, something happens to him or her internally. There is a crossing over of some spiritual line of death to life (Colossians 1:13). Jesus said that he **has** eternal life. Notice that it is not spoken in the future tense; it is in the present tense. It is something that happens internally upon hearing and believing. You might not understand it all, but God has made receiving eternal life so easy that a child can receive the gift of life. God states categorically that if these qualifications are met you will not be condemned at the final judgment. Jesus spoke in the present tense again, "he has crossed over from death to life" (verse 24). Eternal life is not pie in the sky when you die; it is cake on your plate while you wait! Can you believe this? Can you place your trust in Christ and be willing to turn your life over to Him? If so, you will cross over some invisible line in a spiritual sense and be born-again. Here is where you will be attacked in your thought life. The enemy of your soul will whisper for you to not do that, to give your life to Christ. All of a sudden all kinds of thoughts and excuses will arise in a person's heart prompted by the enemy of your soul. Resist him! Is there a good reason for you not to place your trust in Christ? Remember what we said at the beginning of this study, any movement of the Spirit of God to touch someone's life, will

be challenged by the enemy. Be aware of the battles in your thought life to try to dissuade you from giving yourself fully to serve God.

Those of you that are Christians, what kind of struggles in your mind did you have when you first considered the claims of Christ? If you are not yet a Christian, what kind of thoughts comes to your mind that would seek to hinder you from taking that step of faith?

The Dead Will Hear His Voice and Live

The Lord then goes on to talk about the time when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live (verse 25 and 28). He is saying that not only will he give new life to those who repent or turn to Him, but He will also come again and those whose body has been put into the grave will live:

¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

When a believer dies, his spirit and soul, the part of him that is unseen, goes to be with the Lord while his body is buried. Paul the Apostle stated that when we die, we are absent from the body but present with the Lord until His return (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). Wayne Grudem, in his book *Systematic Theology* has something interesting to say on this topic:

"Paul further explains in 1 Thessalonians that the souls of those who have died and gone to be with Christ will come back and be joined with their bodies on that day, for Christ will bring them with Him: "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 4:14). But here Paul affirms not only that God will bring with Christ those who have died; he also affirms that "the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). So these believers who have died with Christ are also raised up to meet Christ (Paul says in verse 17, "We... shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air"). This only makes sense if it is the souls of believers who have gone into Christ's presence who return with him, and if it is their *bodies* that are raised from the dead to be joined together with their souls, and then to ascend

with Christ.”¹

The prophet Daniel also told of a time when the dead will awake, some to everlasting life when they come with the Lord Jesus to be reunited with the bodies, only their bodies will be different. They will be bodies that will shine with the light of the Messiah, reflecting His glory:

¹ “At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—**everyone whose name is found written in the book**—will be delivered. ² Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ **Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens**, and those who lead many to righteousness, **like the stars for ever and ever**. ⁴ But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge” (Daniel 12:1-4).

This new body that we are given will radiate the life of God that we are given by grace when we received Christ. At the moment we cannot see what is going on within us as the Spirit transforms us, but we know that our new body will be like Christ’s body: Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2). Paul talks further about this life that is at work within us—the life that Christ has given us in this way:

⁴² So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The

body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, **there is also a spiritual body**. ⁴⁵ So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, **a life-giving spirit**. ⁴⁶ The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and **as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven**. ⁴⁹ And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, **so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven**. ⁵⁰ I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but **we will all be changed**— ⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:42-54).

What things stand out to you from the above words? If you could ask Jesus for anything based on what we have studied, what would you ask Him? (Pray to close.)

Prayer: Lord, will you transform me within. I give myself wholeheartedly to you. Today I want to turn around and become all that You have called me to be. Come into my life and forgive my sin. I want to be born-again of your Spirit. Amen!

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¹ Systematic Theology, Wayne Grudem, Zondervan Publishers, Page 829.