

Sermon Outline

“LIFE IN HIS NAME”:
THE PURSUIT OF WHOLENESS AND THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

JOHN 5:15-18

I. Why Jesus Is Persecuted (Jn 5:15-16)

- A. The Lord Jesus found the man at the temple and exhorted him to “Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.”
- B. These words...
 - 1. call us to a life of absolute devotion to God.
 - 2. warn us about the consequences of persistent sin.
 - 3. point us toward the Lord Jesus Christ, who gives us eternal life that no sin can take away—the life rooted in God’s own unconditional love toward his Son.
- C. After Jesus had said those words to the former paraplegic, things heat up. The man “went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him” (v 15).
- D. The man might not have been malicious. He may have been genuinely excited and in awe of Jesus.
- E. If so, the man is not that different from the Samaritan woman of John 4, who ran to tell her countrymen about Jesus.
- F. Yet, the results are vastly different between Samaria and Jerusalem.
 - 1. In Samaria, Jesus was hailed as the Savior of the world.
 - 2. In Jerusalem, however, Jesus is viewed as heretic.
- G. The great irony: Jerusalem was the spiritual center of Israel and of the entire world. But Jerusalem does not recognize her Lord when he comes for her.
- H. Let’s not lose sight of the main thread of the narrative. Remember that this account takes place in light of a healing on the Sabbath day.
- I. By healing the man and telling him to carry his bed, the stage is set for the confrontation between Jesus and the Jewish elite of Jerusalem.

- J. Verse 16 explains why the Jews were seeking to persecute Jesus: “And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.”
- K. What do “these things” refer to?
 1. The fact that Jesus made it a practice of healing on the Sabbath.
 2. The fact that Jesus instructed the man to carry his bed on the Sabbath.
- L. The word for “persecute” (Gk: *dioko*) has legal connotations in Greek literature (Gary Burge, *John*, p. 175-176). The Jewish leaders were starting to make a legal case against Jesus.

II. The Humanitarian Sabbath (Mt 2, Lk 13)

- A. Scripture leads us to focus on how Jesus himself responds to the charges that are leveled against him.
- B. As we listen to how Jesus responds, we get a sense of his values. We get a sense of his theology, his own understanding of who God is. We also get a sense of his deepest and truest identity.
- C. In the synoptic Gospels, Jesus defends his Sabbath day healings by arguing that the Sabbath is for the relief of suffering.
- D. Healing of the man with the withered hand (Mt 12)
 - Matthew 12:9-14: “He went on from there and entered their synagogue. ¹⁰ And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?’—so that they might accuse him. ¹¹ He said to them, ‘Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? ¹² Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.’ ¹³ Then he said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other. ¹⁴ But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.”
- E. The woman with the demonic spirit (Lk 13)
 - Lk 13:10-17: “Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. ¹¹ And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. ¹² When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, ‘Woman, you are freed from your disability.’ ¹³ And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. ¹⁴ But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, “There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those

days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day.”¹⁵ Then the Lord answered him, “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it?¹⁶ And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?”¹⁷ As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

F. Jesus healed on the Sabbath for *humanitarian* reasons. God values human life.

III. The Theocentric Sabbath

- A. But Jesus’ healings were grounded ultimately in *theocentric, God-centered* reasons.
- B. The Jewish leaders were incensed at Jesus for healing on the Sabbath, and for asking a man to take up his bed.
- C. “But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father is working until now, and I am working.’”
- D. At the end of the day, everything Jesus does on the Sabbath day comes back down to the will and example of God.

IV. “My Father” (Jn 5:17)

- A. There are three elements in Jesus’ response that we need to consider.
- B. First: Jesus addresses the God of Israel as “My Father.”
- C. While Jews were fine with the notion that God was the Father of Israel, they rarely spoke of God in such intimate terms (D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 249).
- D. To call God one’s own Father was tantamount to claiming equality with God (v 18).
- E. Questions: What exactly is Jesus saying? Who is Jesus claiming to be, when he speaks in such personal and familial terms about the God of Israel?

V. His Father “Is Working Until Now” (Jn 5:17)

- A. Second: God his Father “is working until now...”

- B. In those days, there was a debate amongst the scholars of the Law: Does God himself rest every Seventh Day?
- C. According to Genesis 2, after God finished creating the world, he rested. But what is the nature of this rest?
- D. If we understand God's rest to mean that God stops doing everything, how is it that the universe is still running on the Sabbath day?
- How is it that babies are still being born on the Sabbath?
 - How is it that people die on the Sabbath?
 - How are we still able to experience time and space if God ceased completely from any and every activity on the Sabbath Day?
- E. The consensus: God does not cease from all conceivable work.
1. While God has ceased from his work of creation, his work of providence continues.
 2. God's Sabbath day works of providence are not incompatible with the idea of God resting from creation.
 - a. Since the whole universe is God's domain/home, God never actually moves loads from one domain to another even while he is active on the Sabbath.
- F. Jesus bases his defense on what many already recognize; namely, that God does work on the weekly Sabbath day.
1. God works providentially to preserve his created order, bringing blessing to the righteous, punishment on the wicked, restoration to what is broken, etc.
 2. God's Sabbath activity does not violate his own rest, because the whole universe is his own house/domain.
- G. Implication: If God still works on the Sabbath without breaking his own laws, who are we to say that God cannot heal another human being on the Sabbath day?

VI. "...and I Am Working" (Jn 5:17)

- A. But Jesus doesn't stop with, "My Father is working until now..." He adds: "and I am working."
- B. Herein lies the issue: *Jesus says that he—like God—is also working.* What does that sound like?
1. It sounds as if Jesus is assuming privileges only God enjoys.

2. Whatever Sabbath day rules that the Jews think apply to a human being on the Sabbath, Jesus is suggesting that those rules don't apply to him in quite the same way.
 3. Just as God keeps on working, Sabbath day or not, so does Jesus.
 4. Jesus' calling God "My Father" doesn't help his case with the authorities because it suggests an equal relationship with God.
- C. All these factors come together to point us to one conclusion: This man, Jesus, is claiming that his works are on the same level as God's. This man is claiming to have the same freedom as God. He is virtually claiming to be God's equal.

VII. His Own Father (Jn 5:18)

- A. The Jews solidify their opposition against Jesus.
- B. In their eyes, it's bad enough that Jesus heals on the Sabbath. It's even worse that he instructs a man to take up his bed and walk on the Sabbath.
—Note that carrying beds was not the former paraplegic's daily work. The Sabbath commandment to cease work applies to the work we do for a living, not just any and every activity.
- C. But now, Jesus has crossed the line.
- D. Jesus' explanation makes it sound as if his works and God's works are on the same level: "My Father is working until now, and I am working."
- E. The persecution begins for this reason: "...because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God" (v 18).

VIII. Jesus, the Perfect Image of the Father

Jesus is the Son of God who works in perfect unison with God his Father. If we desire to know God, we must look to Jesus. If we want to know how God wants his commandments applied, we must take our lead from Jesus. If we want to enter true Sabbath rest (eternal life), we must believe in Jesus. Jesus is the new center of Israel and of the world. This is as it should be, because salvation is all about God returning to his people as their King. The eternal life that God gives is life that revolves around Jesus the Son of God. No other eternal life exists. Let us receive Jesus and let him form our lives around him.

Questions for Reflection

1. Was there anything in particular about today's sermon that blessed and encouraged you?
2. Was there anything that you disagree with or found difficult to accept?
3. What are the humanitarian reasons for Jesus' healings (Mt 12, Lk 13)?
4. "My Father is working until now, and I am working." Discuss this phrase. How does it serve as a defense of Jesus' Sabbath works?
5. Why did the Jews want to kill Jesus? What specific reasons are given? (Jn 5:16, 18)
6. Jesus is our central point of reference for our knowledge of God, his commandments, and gift of salvation. Ask God to re-orient your core more and more to Jesus.