

**Series:** Receiving life by believing in God's Son (a Gospel of John study)

**Sermon Text:** John 5:18-30

**Kids Word:** Honor

(\*This is the only account in all 4 gospels)

John said he wrote this letter to help us find “*fullness of life through believing Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*” We’re working through **1:19-11:57** where he tells real-life stories of how it looked when people met Jesus.

- **Verse 18** explains *why certain Jews were persecuting and seeking to kill Jesus*. It was due to *Him breaking* their understanding of *the Sabbath* by healing an *invalid and calling God his Father, making himself equal with God*. Religious leaders, who had spent their lives studying God, thought their traditions and interpretations were equal with Scripture. To “*help God out*”, for example, they created and enforced 39 detailed lists of work they forbade on the *Sabbath*. One day, they encountered a big problem...the *Sabbath’s* co-inventor, Jesus, showed up in a human body suggesting they were *dishonoring* God. On one occasion (in [Mark](#)), He told them God had given the *Sabbath* to ease burdens, but their rules made things worse. Reading these stories requires us to compare our responses to theirs. Are we constantly putting God on trial and burdening people, or are we becoming more like Jesus? This will be our...

**BIG IDEA: We honor the Father by obeying His Son.**

**Let’s consider some key ideas and applications in our text.**

I think we can agree accusatory and unreasonable people are frustrating. In a society where this has become the norm, it can help us to ponder how Jesus cultivated His relationship with God and how He responded to being persecuted for His beliefs. This will be our first point...

***Jesus embodied God’s love and authority.***

- His approach was stunning in *verses 19-20*, “***Truly, truly, I say, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so you may marvel.***” Jesus claimed God’s high demands flowed from God’s *love* through Him! This is how truth must be shared...He was the authority, yet He presented Himself as a humble disciple--a life-long apprentice of His heavenly *Father*, the master tradesman. As I read this, I kept thinking of how human Jesus had come to know His *Father* in heaven. He had apprenticed as a tradesman under His God-fearing adopted dad, Joseph. It occurred to me that Jesus was able to confidently share God’s authoritative truth in

*love* because it's what He had experienced His whole life (cf. Ephesians 4:15). It's simple, really...if you and I hope to not cave, compromise, or act like jerks in an antagonistic world, then we must be engaged in healthy discipling relationships where we're experiencing the *Father's love*. Let's move on to a second point to help us *honor* God...

***Jesus is sovereign over life and judgement.***

- In *verses 21-22*, Jesus didn't say, "Now that I'm here, *judgement is over*", rather He said, ***for as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son.*** Jesus was unwavering on this point in Matthew 5:17-19, "*Do not think I've come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have...come to fulfill them...whoever relaxes the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom.*" It's fine to wrestle with tough truths, but we can't claim to *love* and follow Jesus if we blatantly say His *Father* is wrong or imply the cross relaxes God's high standards. Let me be clear...prideful people who spend their lives rejecting and twisting God's Words are not Christians. Christians are people who progressively grow in humility, agreement with God, and a lifestyle of repentance and faithfulness.
- The proper response to sin is to repent and trust Jesus, not to be like the religious leaders who slandered His Son. Sadly, this still happens to followers of Jesus! I've experienced similar responses for simply repeating stuff God said. It's quite a conflict to quote directly from the Bible and be told, "*Well, that's just your interpretation.*" For instance, Matthew 18:15 says, "*If your brother sins against you, go tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.*" I'm amazed how often people claim, "*That doesn't apply to my situation.*" Another example is Galatians 6:1, "*If anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.*" Like Jesus, we must learn to handle sin in gentle, restorative ways instead of being tempted to join in, fight fire with fire, avoid sinners, or shoot our wounded. Faith in Jesus helps us become like His *Father* who is unbelievably gracious and good to those who deserve punishment (cf. Luke 6:35). One other relevant example is Genesis 1:27, "*God created humans in his own image... male and female he created them.*" Culture claims we're free to choose whether we're a man or woman, but to reject our God-assigned sex is to reject the One

who made us. Since Jesus said, “*If you love me, keep my commands*” (cf. John 14:15), we can’t claim to *love* Him unless we’re humbly submitting to His choices, even if they feel wrong. Oh, and heads up...if we, like Jesus, suggest God seeks to change people’s desires, then prepare to face violent threats and *persecuting* words like “*unloving, judgmental, and un-Christlike.*” In such moments, it helps to remember this final point...

***We honor God by taking Jesus at His Word.***

- Jesus tied everything together in *verses 22-30...the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. If you don’t honor the Son, you’re not honoring the Father who sent him. 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. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man (a reference to Daniel 7). 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. I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.* In his commentary on John, Pastor Chuck Swindoll wrote, “*The Son is the perfect revelation of the Father here on earth in human form. Everything He does reflects the intentions and actions of the Father...Only God can discern the intentions of the heart, because He is omniscient. Only He can weigh the value of a person without being hypocritical because He is perfectly righteous. Only He can decide the fate of humanity because He made us, and He is sovereign. The Father has delegated all judgment to the Son because the Son is equal with the Father. Consequently, Jesus claimed to deserve the same honor due the Father.*” Since Jesus ***embodies God’s love and authority*** and God made Him ***sovereign over life and judgement***, then trusting Him is the only path to forgiveness and eternal life. If you want to avoid being eternally ***judged*** by Jesus, then you must trust Him by grace through faith. There’s an amazing alternative to twisting and denying God’s high standards when we can’t meet them. Do you know what it is? Trusting by faith that Jesus kept God’s commandments,

died in our place, and was raised from the dead by His Father (cf. [Romans 4:25](#))? As you do, you begin experiencing *resurrection life* now and for eternity.

Let's pray...Father, this world dishonors you in so many ways. Instead of submitting to your authority, we deny what you say, twist your words, and seek human solutions to things that can only be solved by the power of your gospel. Help us to realize faith in Jesus is our only reasonable answer, no matter what the question. As Christians, it can be hard not to cave and compromise when people hate and persecute us like they hated and persecuted you. May we take comfort in the fact that you understand this better than anyone and look to you for how to respond with grace and truth. Amen.

Our next song speaks of our Lord's consistency and goodness. Please stand and join us in singing, "Not for a moment will He forsake me."

So, what's your NEXT STEP?

- Remember, our next step always begins with faith in Christ. Either placing faith in Him for the first time or exercising faith to repent, change, and grow. Either way, His Spirit will help you.

#### Quotes/Additional thoughts:

- **Context:** The Gospel of the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, provides a clearly stated purpose. *John 20:30-31* says, "**Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**" Some people demand to have all their questions satisfied before bowing to Jesus, yet John claimed his limited account was enough to bring anyone to faith. As we read it, our Savior and friend emerges from the pages as a real person in the real world. Jesus shows us what we could become, if we too would rely on His infinite Father who will gladly supply whatever we need.
- **Life in his name:** Life is the Greek word, "zōē", which means "Life, Living, Lifetime, Life-Giving" and is where we get the word, "zoology" in English. Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words says it's "used in the NT of life as a principle, life in the absolute sense, life as God has it, that which the Father has in Himself, and which He gave to the Incarnate Son to have in Himself, Jhn 5:26, and which the Son manifested in the world, 1Jo 1:2. From this life man has become alienated in consequence of the Fall, Eph 4:18, and of this life men become partakers through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Jhn 3:15, who becomes its Author to all such as trust in Him, Act 3:15, and who is therefore said to be 'the life' of the believer, Col 3:4, for the life that He gives He maintains, Jhn 6:35, 63. Eternal life is the present actual possession of the believer because of his relationship with Christ, Jhn 5:24; 1Jo 3:14, and that it will one day extend its domain to the sphere of the body is assured by the Resurrection of Christ, 2Cr 5:4; 2Ti 1:10. This life is not merely a principle of power and mobility, however, for it has moral associations which are inseparable from it, as of holiness and righteousness. Death and sin, life and holiness, are frequently contrasted in the Scriptures."
- **Jesus' argument:** "The key in these verses is to see that Jesus is expanding his divine claim... His rabbinic logic argues "from the lesser to the greater." If it is true that his identity as God's Son permits him to assume authority on the Sabbath, then he can assume divine authority

elsewhere...All the tasks listed in 5:24–30 are tasks firmly established in the Old Testament as works of God. Life is a gift from God (Gen. 2:7; Ps. 16:11); judgment is a work of God (Gen. 18:25; Judg. 11:27). Because of who he is, Jesus can do what God does... Too often Jesus is described in the church or in the world as simply a nice man...a charismatic teacher...a dispenser of religious wisdom or a prophet...a model of the spiritual life...Jesus Christ makes ultimate claims for himself in the Gospels...It is not simply that Jesus is doing the Father’s business that makes him unique; it is that Jesus has a relationship with the Father that goes beyond anything humanity has seen before. John reaches for language to express this (sonship, agency), but in the end he is uncompromising...Jesus is describing the perversion of religion that can no longer hear God’s voice. Jesus’ inquisitors represent the “religious establishment” for whom the vigorous preservation of religious tradition counts more highly than the spontaneity and openness of faith. These people know their Scriptures and use them to defend all the wrong things...There are specialists who can cite Scripture and verse, who can measure orthodoxy with exacting precision, who can identify the religious speck in someone’s eye from a great distance, but in whom love for God does not exist (5:42)...On a local level I have seen older church members viciously lash out because “the contemporary service” isn’t to their liking or they perceive that their power and influence are diminishing. All of it, John 5 suggests, is empty religion, religion that seeks its own glory. In the end, it is religion that would condemn and crucify Jesus as a religious duty.” Professor Gary Burge

- **Jesus refused to play games:** “Their real purpose was to eliminate a threat to their authority; however, they masked their true intent by pretending to uphold God’s preeminence in the Sabbath. Jesus didn’t avoid the surface issue. He first corrected their faulty theology, and then He addressed the real question at hand: Who owns the Sabbath? ...The Lord answered that question with six specific claims: (1) He is equal with God (5:19-20), (2) He is the giver of life (5:21, 26), (3) He is the final judge (5:22-23), (4) He will determine the eternal destiny of humanity (5:24), (5) He will raise the dead (5:25-29), and (6) He is always doing the will of God (5:30).” Pastor Chuck Swindoll
- **The risk of honoring Jesus:** “But to make an absolute claim about Jesus is to invite precisely the thing that John 5 describes: persecution... We live in a world of pluralism and tolerance that exerts enormous pressure on us to refine away the distinctives of our faith that might offend... We will hear: It is fine to make Jesus one way to God, but do not make him The Way. It is fine to affirm Jesus as one version of the truth, but make no claim that he is The Truth against which all other truths must be weighed... In a pluralistic society it is a truism that absolute claims to religious truth will lead to certain conflict. More precisely, the “higher” my claims for Christ—that is, the more I affirm his divinity, his exclusive relationship with God—the more separation and alienation I will feel. It is foolish to think I can have it otherwise... John 5 poses a terrible question for me: Am I willing to be labeled as a blasphemer to the religious canons of my day when my hour comes? Is my church equipped to do this? Are we ready to be judged and expelled, to experience social shame and public damning in the name of religion because we are holding on to an absolute faith in Jesus, the Son of God? ...John 9 later will become a test case of a man whom Jesus heals and who then experiences interrogation and excommunication. Any Johannine Christian who reads this story will be relieved to learn that he or she is not alone, that people healed by Jesus have experienced the

same thing.” Professor Gary Burge (Notice: John wrote this to a church that was facing such persecution in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century and to us by extension)

- **Hearing the voice of Jesus:** “His phrasing in 5:25 is interesting because the verb ‘to hear’ takes a double meaning. ‘The dead [all of humanity that has died] will hear the voice of the Son of God . . .’ but only ‘those who hear’ will receive life. The first ‘hearing’ is literal; that is, mere exposure to the sound of His voice. The second has to do with comprehending the message and believing it...Jesus explained the two possible destinies: ‘life,’ which is eternal life, or ‘judgment.’ ...Theoretically, a person can go to trial before the Judge and, if he or she is found to be morally perfect, gain eternal life...in a practical sense, no one is morally perfect. Therefore, to face judgment without grace is to face condemnation. Consequently, Jesus uses the two ideas interchangeably; judgment is condemnation. His point then is to avoid judgment altogether . . . by grace that is received through belief (5:24).” Pastor Chuck Swindoll
- **Raising the dead:** “It was already a popular Jewish belief in Jesus’ day that God would raise the dead...God the creator would bring people back into bodily life, to face the consequences of their evil deeds, or share the rewards of their righteous ones. That, at any rate, was what the book of Daniel had said (12.2), and that statement was very influential in the first century... What Jesus is now saying is that with his coming and public ministry this work of raising the dead has already begun. This is central to the work that he’s watching the father do, and that he is doing alongside him...It will come to an astonishing peak, within this story, when he raises Lazarus from the dead (chapter 11); then it will reach its full flowering when Jesus himself goes through death and out the other side into the full splendour of resurrection life (chapters 20 and 21). The present passage is preparing us for all that...This is the extra, hidden truth inside the statement in the Prologue that anyone who receives him, who believes in his name, gains the right to be called God’s child (1.12–13; 3.1–8) ...they are passing from death to life. The miracle of resurrection is taking place inside them, so that, when they finally die physically, that event will be irrelevant to the new life they already have.” Professor NT Wright
- **Son of Man:** Pastor Bruce Milne wrote, “It should be noted that the seminal use of ‘son of man’ in Daniel 7:13 also lacks the definite article (as it does in our text). It is difficult to believe that this saying in the ears of a Jewish audience, or of someone versed in the Old Testament, would not have had clear overtones of Daniel. This is particularly so since the Son of Man in Daniel 7 appears in the judgment context of the seating of the heavenly court and the opening of the books (Dn. 7:10) ...the note of judgment is also struck in the preceding story (5:14). The ‘something worse’ is his standing at the end before the Son of Man, as one who had personally received his healing grace and yet not changed his lifestyle in the light of it.” Professor NT Wright wrote, “What the father has given to the son, then, is the right to execute judgment on his behalf...son of man’, verse 27) draws on the ancient Jewish picture of ‘one like a son of man’ in Daniel 7, who is given authority over the world, and particularly to bring God’s just judgment...bringing new creation to birth can only be done if the evil that has corrupted the old creation is named, shamed and dealt with. That’s what judgment is all about.”
- **Judgement:** “But this giving of life has also to do with judgment (5:22). In the theology of this Gospel, judgment is not an event left for the end of time. Judgment and the gift of life happen now, in this world...And since Jesus is in this world, since he is the One through whom light



and life are mediated, he becomes the catalyst of divine judgment. Those who love darkness find themselves under judgment already (3:19). Whoever believes in the Son has life already (3:36) ... This makes Jesus God's premier agent in the world (5:24b). In antiquity, being an "agent" referred to a role in which authority and power were delegated to do a task... If a king wanted to negotiate peace or the price of cereal crops from a distance, he would assign an agent to represent himself fully. The agent's words were binding both on his audience and on the king who sent him. Therefore, the agent had to be completely trustworthy. This is the imagery Jesus has in mind. As 5:23 makes explicit, whoever wishes to honor the Father must likewise honor the Son who represents him." Professor Gary Burge

- **Eternal Life:** "Jesus expands and interprets what life and judgment really mean (5:24–30). To hear the words of Jesus (i.e., to accept his entire presence and message) is to believe God (who sent him) ... This decision has present consequences: Eternal life begins immediately, and condemnation and death disappear... But Jesus' work as life-giver and judge also go into the future (5:25, 28–29). Jesus will be God's instrument on the great Day of Judgment. To reinforce this theme, Jesus calls himself "God's Son" (5:25), one of only three times he does so in this gospel (10:36; 11:4; cf. 19:7)." Professor Gary Burge

### **Articles/Songs/Videos:**

### **Helpful thoughts for discussion leaders:**

1. Go for a single, not a home run... don't drag the night out; realize more people = less deep sharing.
2. Keep discussion around 30mins. Once you hit the "sweet spot", spend your time there.

### **Challenge Questions**

*Review the BIG IDEA: We honor God by obeying His Son.*

**-Simple questions...** What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

### **Preparation questions for John 5:18-30.**

- Who were these Jews, and what made them decide to persecute Jesus? (5:18)
- What was Jesus' defense in verses 19-21?
- What do we learn about Jesus and having eternal life in verses 22-24?
- In light of Jesus healing dead limbs and raising Lazarus in chapter 11, to what time period(s) do Jesus words seem to apply in verses 25-30?

### **Application questions from John 5:18-30.**

- What topics tempt you to cave or compromise God's standards? How does wavering ultimately do more harm than good, and how can God's love increase our humble boldness?
- How is it naïve and wrong to disagree with God while claiming to be a faithful follower? What are some better ways to handle our disagreements with God? Share examples if you have any.
- Share examples of how you've struggled to repent and believe when confronted with God's thoughts. How did God help you to see things His way, and what have you learned about helping others repent and believe from the ways God has handled you?
- In what ways does your life honor God by honoring the Son? In what areas do you need to repent and ask for God's help in becoming more obedient to His Son?

**Here are some great resources for digging deeper into community group life...**

How life together looks <http://austinstone.org/stories/film/item/140-missional-community-lukes-story>

Rethinking what we do [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvWnXYSELF4&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvWnXYSELF4&feature=player_embedded)

Numerous articles to provoke thought <http://tod dengstrom.com/archives/>

What groups of 2-3 might look like <http://tod dengstrom.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/LTG-Overview.pdf>