

03.15.26 ~ 4th Sunday in Lent
“Father + Son = Eternal Life”
The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

Words to Ponder

John 5:16-23 ^{NLT}

Pew Bible 926

Jesus Claims to Be the Son of God

¹⁶ So the Jewish leaders began harassing Jesus for breaking the Sabbath rules. ¹⁷ But Jesus replied, “My Father is always working, and so am I.” ¹⁸ So the Jewish leaders tried all the harder to find a way to kill him. For he not only broke the Sabbath, he called God his Father, thereby making himself equal with God.

¹⁹ So Jesus explained, “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing. In fact, the Father will show him how to do even greater works than healing this man. Then you will truly be astonished. ²¹ For just as the Father gives life to those he raises from the dead, so the Son gives life to anyone he wants. ²² In addition, the Father judges no one. Instead, he has given the Son absolute authority to judge, ²³ so that everyone will honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son is certainly not honoring the Father who sent him.

Leader: These Are the Words of Jesus.

People: Thanks be to God!

Words of Assurance

John 5:24-27, 43-44 ^{NLT}

Pew Bible 927

²⁴ “I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.

²⁵ “And I assure you that the time is coming, indeed it’s here now, when the dead will hear my voice—the voice of the Son of God. And those who listen will live. ²⁶ The Father has life in himself, and he has granted that same life-giving power to his Son. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to judge everyone because he is the Son of Man.

⁴³ For I have come to you in my Father’s name, and you have rejected me. Yet if others come in their own name, you gladly welcome them. ⁴⁴ No wonder you can’t believe! For you gladly honor each other, but you don’t care about the honor that comes from the one who alone is God.

Leader: These Are Words of Eternal Life.

People: Thanks be to God!

Please pray with me:

Oh God of all authority, of heaven and earth, we come humbly this morning to be in your presence through worship, prayer, music, and your word. Thank you for the freedom to gather in fellowship and study. On this fourth Sunday of Lent, we ask for better understanding of our relationship with you; we ask you to fortify our faith so

that as we travel the road to the cross with you, we are renewed and all doubts be assuaged. Give us courage to share our faith with those who don't know you; embolden us to glorify you in all that we do or say. Speak through this message and messenger as we explore Christ's authority. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

First, for those who celebrate, let me say, Happy Saint Patrick's Day! And greetings from MACBF (the Mid-Atlantic Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.) The Annual Meeting was held yesterday at Ox Hill Baptist Church in Chantilly, filled with some business (I shared a report from the Clergy Care Team), four motivating breakout sessions, a taco bar lunch to network with CBF churches all around our region, and an inspiring sermon from Rev. Dr. Lynn Brinkley, the CBF Pan African Koinonia Field Ministry Coordinator. The theme, "Rooted in Grace, Growing in Faith: Faithful Well being in a Shifting World," centered around Ephesians 3:14-21. You may hear more about this after Easter as we continue to build our own theme, Roots and Branches. Thank you for your support of both national and regional CBF whose mission connects and equips pastors, laity, and the church as a whole.

You may have noticed we are spending more time in John today; it is purposeful. John is known as the Christological Gospel, written by the beloved disciple or the Johannine community of disciples. There is no better way to prepare ourselves in Lent as we move closer toward the cross. So far, we have explored doubters and sinners who have been forgiven by Jesus. In the context of their stories (Nicodemus and the woman at the well), also along the way were healings, miracles, and signs that put a target on Jesus' back. Before our passage today, Jesus healed an invalid on the Sabbath, a forbidden act. He healed a blind man, the man with a shriveled hand, a crippled woman, and promoted grain picking for

the poor on the Sabbath, all forbidden by the laws of Moses. Those temple leaders who enforced the laws objected and began to calculate how to stop Jesus' disobedience and outright rebellion.

Jesus justified his actions and that only angered them more. Jesus referred to God as his Father, making himself equal with God. According to Jesus' view, although God rested on the seventh day of creation, his work never stopped. The work of creation, life and death, still occurs on the Sabbath; people are born then and some die on the Sabbath, yet God is with them even so. The opponents thought this Sabbath "work" and his teaching that his authority was equal to God were blasphemous because they conceived of him as a mere human. They had seen him grow up from a little boy to a rabbi! But we know that Jesus was not a mere man; he was the incarnation of the divine Word. That's what this challenging long passage is about. Although it is not used in the Lectionary for Lent, it builds upon our understanding of Christ's purpose, incarnation, power, and his divine authority.

According to John, chapter 5, Jesus tries to explain that he and his Father, God, actually worked together to produce the healings and miracles. First, their relationship of Father and Son is even more comprehensive than earthly parental relationships, but it starts there, with love. Father and Son are not conditional upon obedience but are consistent and steadfast equally to, for, and with one another. God's ultimate authority empowers Jesus to **do** the things he does, like raising Lazarus from the dead! He cannot do any of it alone or just from human willpower; Jesus' whole life, everything he does, is reflective of what he sees the Father doing. Are ours? In verse 20, we see that the Father takes

the initiative; he is in control, and he is the source of all. God, the Father, has held back nothing of his activity from the Son. All that God does is revealed to Jesus, and through **our** belief in him, we have access to eternal life. This unity means that if one rejects the Son (like the temple leaders did), they are rejecting the Father, that is, God. Jesus was not arguing just to be different; he was not seeking human glory or validation of his power because he knew it to be true! He was stating the truth of his very existence and incarnation, but they could not understand. This confidence in his purpose and power was what created the conflict that set the scene for persecution.

Jesus would not play their game or follow their rules. He defends himself before the Sanhedrin as if he were on trial; this is a foreshadow of what is to come, of course. God does not want to condemn them all, so Jesus attempts to share God's love and forgiveness even with his critics and detractors! Yet they reject him. They cannot or will not try to understand what eternal life means, and if we are honest, when we were baptized, we did not get it either. Hopefully, as we have lived out our faith in this challenging world and relied more and more upon Jesus to see us through difficult times, we gained strength and clarity and may have a hint of what eternal peace might be. Deep relationship with Christ means we have a deep relationship with God, our creator. Through the Scriptures, Jesus tells us of this grace, love, mercy, hope, and peace to come. But do you really believe it? This chapter in John affirms Christ's authority through God the Father; that is why it is called the most Christological gospel. Christology (a good seminary word to impress your friends) is the branch of Christian theology relating to the person,

nature, and role of Christ. This includes his human and divine attributes that we've discussed here; he and the Father are one. You may want to reread it several times like *Lectio Divina*, praying for understanding.

Jesus is not just an agent of God we can choose to follow or not; he is God. The Son is the source of life. Those who believe in him have eternal life with all the benefits here on earth and in heaven. Jesus explains: “. . . he has granted that same life-giving power to his Son.

²⁷ And he has given him authority to judge everyone because he is the Son of Man (John 5:26b-27.)” This is an important lesson for us too and how we live out our faith both individually and corporately as a church.

The last two verses 43-44 remind us of our natural sinfulness. We'll listen and pay honor to the latest celebrity or guru that has a huge social media following but won't go to church on Sunday to hear the Scriptures proclaimed and interpreted for us. We are willing to listen to false prophets, politicians, or pay thousands of dollars to travel to a money-making workshop somewhere in the Caribbean. Why do this when we have all authority of God through our belief in Jesus Christ as Son and Savior? Jesus accuses the temple leaders of such religious ego and calls us out too. We neglect to give God the honor for our abundant lifestyles; we pull ourselves up by our bootstraps and applaud ourselves for it with awards and recognition yet forget to give thanks for Christ's mercy and justice. Who are we to reject Jesus' generosity? We must honor God in all we do in speech and action. How is your heart in these areas? Jesus sought only God's glory; should we do anything less? Let us pray for holy discernment as we walk toward the cross. Amen? Amen! ||

Please pray with me: God our Father, we thank you for your son, Jesus. Help us to digest these words and remember them. Let us be open and willing to receive your power and authority as we live day to day. Humble our egos Lord, so that we may see your grace, love, and mercy. Strengthen the roots of our faith, share the glory of Christ, and let us plant seeds of it with others this season. May our spiritual practices be disciplined and transformative, while our focus be only upon you and our eternal reward. Bring peace to the middle east we pray and safety to those we know and love. We pray in the holy name of Jesus, Amen.