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Christ's Equality with God John 5:19-24

Christians have been given a mission. We are to go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded us. This is our mission.

Have we been pursuing our mission? Have you been pursuing what Christ has called us to do? Hopefully we have. Hopefully we are continually pursuing our mission.

If we are continually pursuing our mission we are doing exactly what we should be doing as the Disciples of Christ! If we are not continually pursuing our mission then of course there is a problem.

Does the pursuit of our mission mean that we must abandon our everyday activities such as going to school, developing friendships, establishing a career, getting married, buying and taking care of a home, starting and raising a family? Of course not! But neither should any of these things ever overwhelm the mission that Christ has given us. And certainly none of these things will overwhelm us if we remain wholeheartedly committed to Christ.

Are we committed to Christ this morning and have we seen that commitment to Christ worked out in our lives by the way we are pursuing our mission?

If we are committed to Christ in this way I know that from time to time we will be confronted with hard choices. Choices that will at times even make our lives more difficult. Choices that will even at times cause us to suffer. But hopefully even when these hard choices come, we will not shrink back but would remember the difficult choices that faced Christ all through His public ministry as He pursued His own very special God appointed mission. This brings us back to our study of **John 5**.

Hopefully you remember that the Jews in **John 5:16-18** brought against Jesus two different charges. The first charge that they brought against Him was that He had violated the Sabbath. Look at **John 5:16 "And for this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath."** What were the things that He was doing that these religious Jews would have seen as a violation? First of all, Christ healing the paralytic would have been considered a violation of the Sabbath and secondly, Christ's command to the paralytic to pick up his bed and walk would also have been considered a violation of the Sabbath.

These things that Jesus did on the Sabbath, recorded for us in **John 5:1-9**, which were investigated in **John 5:10-15**, became the basis for the first charge against Christ in **John 5:16**.

Christ, in His initial defense against this charge shared with these religious Jews the following statement in **John 5:17, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."** Christ did not have to make this statement to these religious Jews but this was His choice. Certainly from our viewpoint this choice by Christ would have to be considered a difficult choice. It was not designed by Christ in any way to diminish the hostility the Jews felt toward Him. In fact, if anything His defense was meant to increase the hostility the Jews felt toward Him. It was as if Jesus had

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consciously decided to take a step, a very significant step toward the cross of Calvary. It was as if Jesus decided to take a step, a very significant step toward the fulfillment of His earthly mission.

Why would the defense that Christ offered have increased the Jews hostility toward Him? It would have increased their hostility toward Him because He claimed a prerogative that belonged to God alone. He claimed that He had that right to work on the Sabbath just as God had the right to work on the Sabbath.

This claim by Christ led the Jews to charge Christ with a second crime. And what was this second crime that the Jews charged Him with? They charged Him with making Himself equal with God. Let me now read for you **John 5:18**, "**For this cause (in other words what He had said in His defense) the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.**"

Was Christ equal with God? Absolutely. And would He therefore enjoy all the rights and privileges of God? Absolutely! He would enjoy all the rights and privileges as God except for one.

What was that one right or privilege Christ had voluntarily and temporarily given up in His incarnation? According to **Philippians 2** He voluntarily and temporarily chose to veil His glory during the period of His incarnation. In other words He voluntarily and temporarily chose to veil His intrinsic worth as God. But certainly this veiling of His glory did not suspend or diminish certain other rights and privileges that equality with God would entail including His right to work on the Sabbath. This was the defense that He offered to these very hostile religious Jews. Therefore based on Christ's defense it is very understandable why the Jews would have charged Him with making Himself equal with God and would therefore be even more eager kill Him.

But now we come to another question. What would the religious Jews have meant when they charged Christ with making Himself equal with God? They would have meant that He was making Himself another God or a competing God. This is the only way that they could have understood what Jesus had said in light of their beliefs at that time.

But certainly Jesus would not have wanted people, either by His words or actions to conclude He was another God or a competing God. Therefore He offers another defense which is far more extended than the one we have seen in **John 5:16-18**. This leads us to the passage that we will begin to examine this weekend. The passage that we will begin to examine is **John 5:19-47**.

In John 5:19-47 we see Jesus giving a very thorough defense against the charges brought against Him as He might in a courtroom setting. This more thorough defense by Christ contains three very basic elements. And because of this the question that we will begin to answer this weekend is this: What are the *three* basic elements of Christ's defense in John 5:19-47?

Obviously because of the length of this passage and because of the very significant truths that we will consider in our study of this passage we will not be able to complete our study of this entire section this weekend. Actually this weekend we will be able only to examine the very first element of Christ's extended defense.

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I would hope that as we examine the first basic element of Christ's defense that we once again be challenged to take our mission as seriously as Christ took His mission. What is the first basic element of Christ's defense?

The first basic element of Christ's defense was a description of His relationship to His *Father* (John 5:19-24).

We find Christ's description of His relationship with His father in **John 5:19-24**. Let me read this passage for you, "**Jesus Therefore answered and was saying to them, 'Truly, Truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. (20) For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and greater works than these will He show Him, that you may marvel. (21) For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. (22) For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, (23) in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. (24) Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.'**"

There obviously is a lot being said by Christ in these verses. One thing that should be obvious right away in **John 5:19-24** is that He is not in any way challenging their statement that He had made Himself equal with God. In fact, what we will see as we march through these verses is that He is telling them that they are in fact absolutely correct. He is equal with God. He supports His claim that He is *equal* with God in three different ways in John 5:19-24. What is the first way that He does this?

Christ first of all supports His claim that He was equal with God by inferring that He and God possessed the same *nature* (John 5:19). How did Christ do this?

Let us begin by looking at **John 5:19**. What are the first two words? The first two words that we see are "**Truly, truly,**" by using this phrase Jesus is alerting these religious Jews to the importance of what He is about to say.

What were His next words, "**the Son can do nothing of Himself.**" This is a very interesting statement for someone who the Jews believed by His earlier statement had just made Himself equal with God. How could someone who claimed to be equal with God be a totally dependent person? How could someone who claimed to be equal with God say that He could do nothing of Himself? How could Jesus say such a thing?

Let us continue to read, "**The Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing for whatever the Father does, these things, the Son also does in like manner.**"

The Son can do nothing of Himself first of all because He is committed to doing only those things, which He sees His Father doing. He in effect is saying "If you have a problem with what I am doing then your beef it not with me but with my Father since I do not do anything that I don't see My Father doing first."

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Does this mean that Christ like Superman has some kind of supernatural eyesight so that He is able to look directly into the throne room of God and mimic what His Father is doing in a glorious game of follow the leader. This seems to me to be rather absurd. I actually believe He is saying something else.

When Christ speaks of seeing the Father He is not talking about supernatural eyesight but rather He is talking about supernatural *insight*. (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Jesus is not by His supernatural eyesight looking into God's throne room and mimicking the actions of His Father. Rather, I believe that Jesus using His supernatural insight, is able to peer into God's eternal plan is see what His Father is doing. But how could He have this kind of insight?

Let me read for you **1 Corinthians 2:11**, "**For who among men knows the thoughts of man except the Spirit of the man, which is in Him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.**" What does this truth practically mean in respect to the passage that we are studying?

The only way that Christ could have had the ability to see what His Father was doing or in other words to see His eternal plan was if He Himself was *God* or in other words God the Son.

But now we come back to ask the question we first asked. If Christ was in fact God, or in other words shared the same nature as God, then why would Jesus say that He could do nothing of Himself? Since Jesus was the Son of God, or in other words God the Son, He knew as a good son that He could not do anything *independent* from His Father's will. His relationship with His Father was equal but it was not reciprocal. He knew that He had to respond to His Father's will rather than vice-a-versa.

Do you believe that these words that Jesus spoke to these religious Jews would make these Jews happy? Of course not! Jesus had continued to stoke the fires that He had initially lit earlier in the chapter. He is continuing His march toward Calvary. How else should we support His claim that He is equal with God?

Christ secondly supports His claim that He was equal with God by telling the Jews that He does *works* that are associated with God alone (John 5:20-22).

Let me read for you **John 5:20** "**For the Father Loves the Son, and shows Him all the things that he Himself is doing; and greater works than these will He show Him that you may marvel.**"

We have seen that Christ has already made it clear that He is able to see what the Father is doing. But does this mean that He is able to see ALL that the Father is doing? And what is the answer to this question? "**For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all the things that He Himself is doing.**" Because God loved his Son He *revealed* to His Son every detail of His eternal plan. He revealed to His Son every detail of what He was doing.

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Now this knowledge of every detail of God's eternal plan has significant ramifications. **"The Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing for whatever the Father does, these things, the Son also does in like manner."** If the Son sees it, then the Son will do it. This means that He will inevitably do what? He will inevitably do works that are only associated with God which Jesus calls the **"Greater works."** Let me read for you the rest of the verse **"For the Father Loves the Son, and shows Him all the things that He Himself is doing; and greater works than these will He show Him that you may marvel."**

So what are these greater works that God will show Him and the works that He Himself will do that will cause even these religious Jews to marvel?

The first work that Jesus presents to support His claim that He is equal with God is His role in giving life (John 5:21). Let me read for you **John 5:21, "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes."**

When Jesus speaks of Himself as giving life and sovereignly giving life to whom He wishes we must understand this primarily but not necessarily exclusively in terms of resurrection life. We must understand this primarily but not necessarily exclusively in this way because of the phrase "just as the Father raises the dead."

Obviously the Jews hearing the words of Jesus in **John 5:21** would have understood Him to be claiming a prerogative that correctly belonged only to Jehovah God. Certainly they had never envisioned Jehovah God as sharing this work of resurrection with any other. Clearly in the minds of the Jews, Jesus would have by His statement again been making Himself equal with God. But Jesus does not stop there.

The second greater work that Jesus presents to support His claim that He is equal with God is His role in exercising judgment (John 5:22). Let me read for you **John 5:22, "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son."**

This statement seems even more extreme than what He said in **John 5:21**. At least in **John 5:21** it appeared as if Jesus saw Himself as sharing with the Father the work of giving life, but here it appears that Christ considers the work of judgment to be His exclusive domain. Is this true? Is the work of judgment the exclusive domain of Christ? The answer is of course, "Yes and No."

Jehovah God has long been correctly recognized as the judge of the whole earth, this is clear in **Genesis 18:25**. But we need to understand that though Jehovah God is one God He is more than one person. And what was not clearly seen in the Old Testament has now been made clear by passages such as this throughout the New Testament.

Who is the judge of the whole earth? Christ is the judge of the whole earth. But we need to be careful to balance this with what we have already considered.

Christ has been entrusted with the office of judge, but this does not mean that Jesus will exercise judgment independent of the Father. He can do *nothing* of Himself.

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Christ will now give us a third and final reason why He claims these Jews should consider Himself equal with God. Not only does He enjoy the divine nature with His Father, and not only does He enjoy the same works as His Father

But Christ thirdly supports His claim that He was equal with God by telling the Jews that He deserves the *same* honor as His Father (John 5:23-24). Why did God the Father in the outworking of His eternal plan place Christ in a position to do the greater works that were just described for us in **John 5:21-22**?

Let me read for you **John 5:23 "In order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father, He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him."** Since there is a solidarity and unity between the Father and the Son, both as to their nature and their works, they must be accorded the *same* honor. What an incredible statement.

In whatever way we honor the Father, we must be prepared to honor the Son. This would mean if we praise the Father we must be willing to praise the Son. This would mean that if we worship the Father that we would worship the Son. If we are unwilling to extend to the Son the same honor as we would His Father then we have dishonored the Father.

Now Jesus is ready to issue a personal challenge to these religious Jews based on everything that He has said up to this point about Himself and His relationship with God.

Let me read for you in **John 5:24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life."**

He is telling these religious Jews that if He is not acknowledged, received and trusted as being equal with God then ‘God’ to them is only a three-letter word, and nothing more. God reveals Himself in Jesus Christ. So when people talk about believing in ‘God’ and do not have the slightest commitment to Christ, Jesus Himself is telling them, ‘You do not know my Father!’ God, in abstraction from the Son that He sent, is not the living God, but simply a combination of willful ignorance and wishful thinking in the minds of the spiritually blind and lost. This point is the point that Christ drives home in **John 5:24**

CONCLUSION

If you are here this weekend and you have not, in your desire to be set free from your sin, turned to Christ and embraced Him by faith as your Lord and Savior then you have dishonored the Father. But, if you do turn from your sin in order to embrace Christ as your Lord and Savior then you can be assured, based on the promise of Christ, that you will receive the gift of eternal life and you will not come into judgment. What a wonderful gift to us.

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But we should not think that possessing the gift of life is a life free from any responsibility. We have the responsibility to walk in communion with Christ and of course that would mean we would take our mission of going into the world to make disciples, baptizing and teaching them to observe all that I commanded you as seriously as Christ took His mission. And of course as we by His grace do this we honor Christ.

Are you presently honoring *Christ*?