

Sermon on John 5:19-24
Pastor David Wietzke
2nd Sunday of End Time: Last Judgment (B)
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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. 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. 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. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, 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.

"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 5:19-24)

Predicting the future is a tricky thing.

That doesn't stop people from trying; in fact we all do this every day. In some cases we don't have much choice. Everyone who invests money is trying to predict the future of their investment. Students pursue a career path not just on the basis of what they enjoy but also because they predict that they might be able to make a living doing it. When a hurricane forms in the ocean forecasters try their mightiest to predict the strength, direction and timing of the storm's path.

When it comes to the end of the world Jesus tells us that some predictions are futile. The timing, he says, is not something God does not reveal to human beings. But what he does tell us today is essential information for every human being. He tells us not when, but what God has in store. He focuses on himself and what God sent him to do.

The verses from John chapter 5 that we hear in today's Gospel come on the heels of Jesus' miracle of healing a crippled man by the pool of Bethesda. Perversely, the enemies of Jesus actually found fault with that miracle that he did. Because he told the man to "pick up his mat and walk" the leaders actually accused the healed man of working on the Sabbath Day by carrying his mat. When the poor man protested, "The man who miraculously healed me told me to carry my mat, so I was just doing what he said"--then they shifted their accusations to Jesus himself. "So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him."

They wanted to keep judging Jesus by their standards. But Jesus' words to them make it clear that neither they nor we are in any position to judge Jesus. He has been appointed as our judge! But that's not all he is. We can **PREPARE FOR THIS WORLD'S END BY REMEMBERING JESUS' DOUBLE ROLE: 1) He judges and 2) He saves.**

I. Jesus is the one who judges

Still today there are a lot of people who want to judge Jesus—just as his enemies tried to judge him long ago. They do it in different ways, of course. They judge his Word. And they judge his people. Just like the Jewish leaders of old, they want to subject Jesus to their own standards and see how he measures up.

Does he properly promote and validate all types of sexual expression? Does he stand for liberation of oppressed people groups and subcultures? Does he promote and ensure economic equality, personal liberty and freedom of choice (however those things are defined)? Now of course some people will try to turn Jesus' words into whatever it is they want to hear and say that yes, he approves of them. But others, like the Jewish leaders, determine that Jesus isn't meeting their self-defined moral code. And so they condemn him and his Word and his followers.

Could we do the same thing without realizing it? Could we find ourselves trying to judge Jesus? Don't we sometimes ask ourselves: does Jesus' word give me freedom to do what I want? Does Jesus' word fit into my preconceived notions of what I want my life to look like? Does he let me follow my dreams? And if Jesus and his Word doesn't suit our fancy will then we calmly say, "Well, the Bible says some good things, but there are other things I'm not so sure about, I don't know if it's quite what I'm looking for in my life right now."

But who are we to judge him? Who are we to judge our own Maker? **"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."** That includes creating the world itself. And the one who created the world makes it clear, in our conscience and in his written word, that we are obligated to him and not the other way around. He judges us, how dare we judge him? **"The Father... has entrusted all judgment to the Son, 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."**

Let there be no doubt - Jesus is your judge and the judge of all humanity. How foolish of us to think that we can just go our own way as if God were utterly uncaring about it! We owe God, Father and Son, our honor and that means listening to and obeying what he says.

(You'll notice, too, how clearly Jesus insisted on having equal honor with the Father—a timeless warning concerning all religions or religious groups that try to offer Jesus a place less than fully divine, who refuse to give him the exact same level of worship and devotion that God the Father receives.)

It's these sorts of words of Jesus that led C.S. Lewis to declare that the most foolish thing anyone could ever say about Jesus is that he was a "good man" and nothing more. Because, Lewis points out, a man who went around saying the kind of things that Jesus did about himself would not be a good man at all. He could be a deranged lunatic; he could be a dangerous megalomaniac; or else he is the Son of God that he claimed to be. But he didn't

give us the option of saying that he was just a good man. Because that's not who he is. He's the eternal Word, the Son of God, and the judge of all the earth.

II. Jesus is the one who gives life and salvation

But thanks be to God that's not all he is. He's not only the Judge. He's also the one who raises the dead, who brings people to life everlasting. In other words, he's the Savior. Look at what he says:

Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. 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. ... 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.

I didn't even need to tell you how to feel about the truth that Jesus is the judge. Our own consciences speak loudly and clearly enough: being judged by a holy Lord is a terrifying thought. We all know we are should be liable for punishment many, many times over. But as Jesus said a few chapters earlier, God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it but in order to save it (John 3:17). Here he gives a beautiful invitation: believe in me and be saved. ***"Whoever hears my Word and believes him who sent me."***

That salvation is by faith. But Jesus also makes it plenty clear that it is entirely a gift from God and not our own working--even our faith. After all, who can bring themselves to life from the dead? ***"The Son gives life to whom he is please to give it."*** If we have life it's all God's doing and all to his glory! Yet Jesus says that it comes to everyone who believes.

So what, specifically, are we to believe? We believe that God's love, contrary to what we might expect, was extended to sinners. We believe that this love centered in his Son. We believe that Jesus of Nazareth was that very divine Son of God, God and man in one person from his birth in Bethlehem. We believe that as the God-man he removed our condemnation by taking it on himself on the cross. We believe that when someone comes to faith in Jesus they truly have been born again, brought new life by the power of Jesus and his Holy Spirit.

And there's one more very important thing we believe. We believe that one day all of this will be made public and clear. We believe in a judgment day that will cover all the earth with Jesus doing exactly what he said. We believe that he will not just give spiritual life to his people but raise their bodies from the grave--proving to all mankind that those who fell asleep in him were not lost but that their souls were in glory with him. And we believe that the condemnation which he warns about those who rejected him will also come about exactly as he has said.

How thankful we can be that Jesus not only judges, but saves. How thankful we can be that his judgment is all about faith in him--a living faith that does good works not to earn heaven but to thank him for his grace. How glad we can be that Jesus has told us all of this in

advance, and that his words are clear and not mysterious; that he did not keep this secret from us but has told us exactly what we need to be prepared for a day that will be more awesome than we can possibly imagine right now. And that necessary information is: repent and trust in me, that I am exactly what my very name indicates: your Savior and your sure hope of everlasting life!

Conclusion

Don't ignore Jesus' call to repent. He is very much the Judge. Those who reject him will perish. But even more, don't ignore his invitation to believe and be saved. That's why he came.

You know what's coming. Jesus has predicted the future, and his Word will never fail. Remember him, and trust in his promise of life eternal! Amen.