

God's Shared Work

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Date: 10 November 2019

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[0 : 0 0] I'd like us to turn back to the section that we read, John chapter 16 and into John chapter 17. We can read again the very last verse that I read from John 17 at verse 4, where Jesus said, I have glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

There are many things that make Christianity unique as a religion. That's been true from its origins 2,000 years ago and it's true today as well.

In lots of ways, Christianity has stood out as different from the world around it. Back in the days of the New Testament, one of the great differences that Christianity expressed was the fact that people were treated the same.

In the culture of the day then, there was a very, very clear kind of class system where people were in certain categories and those who were at the bottom were very much devalued and disregarded.

The same kind of pattern has existed in different parts of the world throughout history. Christianity was unique because it blew all that away and said that everybody is equal.

[1 : 1 9] Christianity is also unique in terms of how it views the world. Many, many religious groups over the years have viewed the world as a bad thing and have kind of thought that anything physical is bad, but the spiritual side of things is good.

And then at the other extreme, you've got people who look at the world and they think, this world is so amazing. The world itself is God and nature is something that should be worshipped. Christianity is unique because it tells us that the world is special and good, but it's not God.

Instead, it's made by God. And Christianity is unique because I think almost all religious systems in one way or another tend to be based on the idea of working our way up to God.

And of course, Christianity is brilliant because it's the very opposite. It's God coming down to reach us. There's lots of ways in which Christianity is unique, but maybe the way in which Christianity is most unique, possibly, is in the doctrine of the Trinity.

There are many, many world religions which say there are loads of gods. So you go back 2,000 years ago to when Jesus spoke these words. All around you, you had people who believed in many, many different gods and we still have the names of them today.

[2 : 4 5] Zeus and Mars and Jupiter and Poseidon and all these different names that we hear from these great Greek mythologies that we have.

There was that great view that there were many, many, many gods. And that was a common view. Perhaps what's maybe more common now is the idea that there is just one God.

And that's the defining feature of Islam. God is one. Very, very clear, alone, singular. Just God alone as one.

Christianity is unique because it presents us with something that is not this polytheistic many, many, many gods. But nor is it this idea of pure oneness where God is this solitary figure in total isolation.

Christianity tells us something different. Christianity tells us that God is one. There is only one God. But at the same time, God is three.

[3 : 49] And that's the basis of the Christian belief about who God is. One God, three persons. Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

And this presents us with a beautiful reality that God alone is God. There's not many, many different gods. There's just one. But that one God is not some isolated, lonely, independent figure.

Instead, God is this beautiful relationship of a father to a son. A son to a father. And a spirit between the two.

Father, Son and Spirit together as one God. And that's the core foundation of who God is. And that's the great truth that the Bible reveals to us.

And so, whenever we think about God, we should think about the fact that God is one. But that also that God is three. And that there's this sort of shared life and shared love between them.

[4 : 55] And that reveals itself in lots of ways throughout Scripture. And that's what I want us to think about a little bit today. I want us to think about how God works.

And in particular, I want to think about the fact that God's work is a shared work. It's a work that's done between Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Because the Bible makes it very clear that these persons of the Trinity, they work together in order for God to accomplish His purposes.

And that's what's hinted towards us in the verse that we just read. Jesus says to His Father, God the Son, saying to God the Father, I have glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work you gave me to do.

We're going to look at this, I suppose, in a general way. And we're only going to be scratching the surface. And I want us just to look at three things. First two, very briefly.

[5 : 57] And then the last part we'll look at in a little bit more detail. So, the first thing we're going to say is that Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together in creation.

The Bible makes it abundantly clear that God is the creator of the world, the creator of the universe, of all that there is. It's one of the very first things that we learn in the Bible.

Genesis 1.1, In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. But as we go through the Bible, we realize that there's a little bit more detail to that.

And each person, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, participates in that work. In fact, you only have to go to verse 2 of Genesis to see the first hint of that.

It says that the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters as that work of creation got underway. Then, further on in the New Testament, we're told very clearly that God the Son had a key role in that work of creation as well.

[7 : 05] In fact, it was the very first verse of John's Gospel that we're reading from today. It tells us that. Well, sorry, not the first verse. The first three verses. In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God. The Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him. And without Him was not anything made that was made.

Hebrews 1.1 says the same thing, that it's through the Son that God created the world. So when you think of creation, we need to be thinking, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all working together.

And that work, that shared work, is brought out beautifully in the creation of humanity. Genesis 1.2 says this. And I'm sure you're familiar with what it says, but if you're not, listen very carefully.

This is God speaking. And He says, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

[8 : 11] And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, and every creeping thing that keeps on the earth. So God created man in His own image.

In the image of God, He created him. It's a very clear emphasis on this shared work in the work of creation. And all of that, what we just read there from Genesis 1, highlights a very simple, but a very glorious point.

The fact that you are the creation of God, the Holy Trinity. You are the work of Father, Son, and Spirit.

And I think that's part of the wonder of the complexity of the human body. Even just looking at your hands, the way you can just, I can never quite get over it. Before I became a minister, I was an engineer, so I love how things work.

But how does it work that you can think a thing and move your hand? It's just incredible. Think, fingers are going to move, and they move. Think a thing and move your hand, or move your foot, or whatever. And the complexity of it all is astonishing.

[9 : 19] It's amazing how everything works together so remarkably. And yet that shouldn't surprise us, because God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are very capable, and very skilled.

And that's in fact what makes us so precious as humans. the fact that we are God's workmanship. And that's why sin is such an awful thing, because sin ruins precious people.

That's one of the things that I love about Remembrance Sunday. In so many ways, it's a solemn day, and it's reminding us of so many horrible blemishes in the history of humanity.

But one of the wonderful things about Remembrance Day is that it's a great reminder that people are precious. And that the people who served in the wars are so precious.

And that's what makes sin awful. Sin which manifests itself in wars, or in conflict, or in exploitation, or in cruelty, or in whatever way it may be, is horrible, because it ruins people who are precious.

[10 : 31] And the reason people are precious is because we are the handiwork of God. Father, Son, and Spirit work together in creation.

The second thing I want to say is that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit work together in revelation, in revealing God to us. When we read to Genesis 1, when you read, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and then you read through that amazing narrative of how God brought all that is into being.

We can be struck by many amazing things. The fact that God is there in the beginning, the fact that He is creator, the fact that we are the work of His hands. And these are all glorious truths, but we can sometimes miss what is perhaps the most amazing truth of all, that when you open Genesis 1 and start reading, God is talking to you.

And that's the most amazing thing of all. That's the glory of the Bible. God is speaking to us. And that means that He wants us to know about Him.

And He wants us to actually know Him. And that's all the more remarkable when we think of the fact that God, as Father, Son, and Spirit, God doesn't need us.

[11 : 49] God's not dependent on us in any way. God is completely self-sufficient, self-reliant. He doesn't need us. And yet, He wants us and wants us to know Him.

And through creation in general, but in a special way through the Bible, God is revealing Himself to us. And we must never lose sight of the wonder of that, the fact that God wants to talk to you.

God wants you to open the Bible and to hear His voice. God wants to tell you things. God wants you to know Him. Every time we open our Bibles, we are hearing God's voice speaking.

But what I want us to notice is that that work of God revealing Himself, what we call revelation, as God speaks through the Bible, that again is a shared work.

You look through the Bible, you see God the Father speaking, you see God the Son speaking, you read about God the Spirit speaking. Mark 1, 11 is a good example. A voice came from heaven where God the Father said, You are my beloved Son.

[13 : 01] With you I am well pleased. The Holy Spirit speaks through the pages of Scripture. Peter speaks about that in his second letter. He says, No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

And of course, we were reading much of what, as we read in chapter 16, we were reading God the Son speaking and so much of the Gospels record that.

John 12 is another good example where Jesus said, I've not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment, what to say and what to speak. When I speak, therefore, I say, as the Father has told me.

And that emphasis of Jesus there, the fact that He speaks what the Father wants Him to speak, highlights that there's this great coherence and unity in what God the Trinity says to us.

Another example was highlighted in chapter 16. We read it. You can see it in verse 13 if it's open in front of you. Jesus said, When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak in His own authority, but whatever He hears, He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come.

[14 : 19] He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you. And so, it's just reminding us again that every time you open the Bible, you are hearing the message that God the Holy Trinity wants you to hear.

Reminding us that really the Bible is not just something we should just pick off our kind of to-do list every day. It can so easily be like that we can think, Oh, I better just read my Bible because I should just read my Bible. And we rush through it.

What we want to do is stop and take our time because every time you pick up the Bible, you are encountering the living triune God.

And we should be praying, Lord, help me to listen to you. It's important also to remember that God is revealing Himself to us in the pages of the Bible.

The Bible is a glorious presentation of the truth about God. It records many different things. It records great events of history. It records profound teaching.

[15 : 31] It expresses the deepest levels of human emotion. It gives us some precious, amazing promises. It's written in beautiful poetry, vivid descriptions, some awe-inspiring visions.

It's the greatest message that the world has ever known. It's absolutely astonishing. And it's the work of God, the Trinity.

But God's not just doing that for the sake of making a magnificent document. He's doing it because He wants you to know Him. So when we think about creation, we shouldn't just think of maybe God the Father doing it.

When we think of the Bible, we shouldn't just think of God the Son doing it. We should remember that in the works of creation, the works of revelation, it's a shared work between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

But what I want us to focus on mostly for the last wee while is the fact that the work of salvation is also a shared work between God the Son, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

[16 : 48] When you think of the Bible, the great message of the Bible is a message of salvation. Humanity is broken, we've fallen from our original state, and sin has left us in desperate need.

But God has not abandoned us. And the Bible presents us with this great record of what we call redemptive history, or you could say the history of salvation, a record of what God has done across different periods of time in order to rescue us from our desperate need.

And what I want us to see is that that work of salvation is a shared work between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. We can only stretch a surface on this, but I want to say three things very briefly, and they're the three points that are on your notice sheet there.

First of all, when it comes to the plan of salvation, as you can see, the Father initiates, the Son accomplishes, and the Spirit applies.

So sin has left humanity in a dreadful state. We see the wreckage of that all around us. We even see it in our own lives, the brokenness and pain and horror that sin can cause.

[18 : 04] And we must never forget that sin gives God every reason to walk away from us. One of the most astonishing things about the Bible is that it doesn't stop after the third chapter.

So Genesis 1, Genesis 2, God creates the world. Genesis 3, humanity rebels against God, and God could have said, that's it. And the Bible could have stopped after eight pages or whatever it is.

God had every excuse to abandon us, but he didn't. And from the very moment in which humanity fell, God initiates a plan.

A great plan where through the ages of history, through the family descendant, working through God's chosen people, a saviour is going to come who will defeat sin and rescue humanity.

And that saviour is Jesus Christ, God the Son. So the Father initiates a plan, the Son accomplishes everything that is required within that plan.

[19 : 13] Jesus himself said in our text today, he said to the Father, I've accomplished the work you gave me to do. And that work is huge. I love the way the Bible just throws in a little word and you think it says, you look at verse 4 there of chapter 17, I glorified you on earth having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

That word work has a massive amount of theology behind it. Because if you ask the question, what's needed to be accomplished in order for people like you and me to be saved?

It's a huge amount to do. We need someone who can represent us as a fellow human. We need a sacrifice that's going to cover our sin and turn aside the wrath of God. We need someone who's going to satisfy all that God commands.

Someone who can keep God's standards without ever, ever failing. Somebody who can stand up to the power of the devil. Someone who can defeat and destroy the kingdom of evil.

Somebody who will pay the penalty of sin. That's death itself. Someone who's then able to be exalted over everyone as king of kings and lord of lords.

[20 : 19] We need God himself to be our saviour. And Jesus does it all. He accomplishes everything that's needed.

Which is exactly why what did he say on the cross? He said it is finished. Because he has done it. And then the Holy Spirit himself applies all of this to the believer.

So the Holy Spirit calls us and softens our hearts. The Holy Spirit comes and gives us new life by regenerating us. The Holy Spirit unites us to Jesus so that we can benefit from all that he's done.

His death pays the penalty for our sin. His risen life makes us alive. He unites us to Jesus. As a result we're adopted into God's family as his children and the Holy Spirit enables us to recognise God as our father.

The Holy Spirit sanctifies us so that those of us who've been rescued from sin can be transformed back into the image of God back to how we were meant to be. In all of this God the Holy Trinity is working together perfectly.

[21 : 33] Every area is covered. Every step of the plan is achieved. Everything that needs to be done is done. And what do we do? Nothing.

Except benefit. And thank God with all our hearts. The triune God is working out a perfect plan of salvation.

salvation. Next, when it comes to the work of salvation as you can see in the sheet the father sends the son comes and the spirit remains.

That's the great centre point of scripture and of history the fact that God the father sends his son into the world. and at the heart of that sending is his love.

That's the emphasis the great emphasis of John 3 16 for God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

[22 : 42] Why did God send? Why did God the father send God the son? Why did he send his precious precious eternally beloved and cherished son? Why did God the father do that?

He did it because