

Why We Worship Jesus

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[0 : 00] If you would turn to John chapter 5, Dick read for us earlier on page 890, I think you'll find that a great help. Thank you for your congratulations about Australia winning the World Cup cricket.

We have a certain New Zealander on staff and what Australia's victory means, we shellacked the Kiwis in the final match. What it means is my life will be more bearable around the office.

This is the first time that I can remember we've ever used the Athanasian Creed in a morning service and I hope it was not too much like taking your vitamins. But it is worth careful reading and reflection.

It's a great summary of Christian thinking and reflection for the first 500 years of Christianity. Christianity and the key to it really is that it's an act of worship.

Twice it says that the Catholic faith is that we worship one God in Trinity and the Trinity in unity. So I'm very conscious if we come to this passage this morning.

[1 : 12] It's not about mastering the doctrine of the Trinity. It's about delighting in our God. And I thought it might be helpful to prepare us for this passage.

So we pick it up in verse 19 really of John 5. And Jesus is in the middle of explaining the...

Now some of you were confused last week about that sound. I just assure you it is a woodpecker. It's a flicker and it's mating season.

And the male flickers love to sharpen their beak on metal objects. I can tell you lots of interesting facts about them but I choose to ignore it.

So if you can... I've often found that if there's something important to say in a sermon, there'll be something like that happening. So it must mean this is important. So you remember in the morning of this day, Jesus had healed a man who'd been paralyzed for 38 years.

[2 : 22] And when he was challenged about doing it on the Sabbath, he said, My father is working and I am working. And the response is immediate and furious.

Verse 18, They try all the more to kill him because he's calling God his father, making himself equal with God. What they are saying to him, what the authorities are saying to him is, We've got no idea how you made that guy get up and walk.

In fact, we refuse to even think about it. But you are just a man. And what you are saying is the great sin. That's the sin that Adam committed in the garden, making himself equal with God.

It's bald-faced blasphemy and you must be killed. And I think it's very appropriate that we look at this on Palm Sunday because in his response in verses 19 to 24, Jesus echoes much of what's going on in Palm Sunday.

He reflects the same kind of things. His words here, if you can understand this, are full of majesty and modesty at the same time.

[3 : 32] Both are astonishing. His majestic claims and the modesty of his claims. And I honestly have come to the end of preparing. I don't know which to be more astonished by.

The height of the majesty of his claims or the humility of the modesty of his claims. And I think the best way for us to look at it is to look at those two things, the majesty and the modesty, because each one, with each one, Jesus makes a specific application at the end.

So we're going to have two points. And at the end of each point, there is a specific application that Jesus makes, which is just great. It means the preacher doesn't have to think too much.

Well, that's not true. So let us look first at the astonishing height of the majesty that Jesus claims.

And I think these six verses, John 5, 19 to 24, have some of the most sublime, most supreme and simple claims that Jesus makes anywhere at any time in the New Testament.

There's nothing that comes close to this. And one of the things that's really easy to pass over as we just read it are the words of comparison. And so if you have it open, I draw your eyes back to the

comparison words.

[4 : 55] Look at verse 19. Verse 21. Second half. Whatever the father does, that the son does likewise, in just the same way.

The father shows him all he is doing. Verse 21. Verse 22. Verse 22.

The father has given all judgment to the son, so that all may honor the son, just as they honor the father.

Do you understand? Can you get a feeling of the comparison in those words? There is no limit. There is no boundary. There is no restriction on Jesus' words and action. Everything the father does, all says Jesus, he does.

Everything the father has with regard to judgment, he has given to the son. And all honor that belongs to the father now belongs to the son and must be given to the son.

[5 : 58] It is absolutely breathtaking. Jesus says, My deeds are divine deeds. My knowledge is divine knowledge. My prerogatives are divine prerogatives.

My authority is divine authority. And I am the right recipient of divine worship. And I want to just simplify this and just take two of the claims that Jesus makes here.

The first is the claim to divine knowledge. At the end of verse 19 and the beginning of verse 20, Jesus says that the son sees what the father is doing.

For whatever the father does, that the son does likewise. So you think about the context. You want to understand how I can raise a man who's been 38 years paralyzed?

I am doing what the father is doing. The reason is because the father shows me all that he is doing. And the implication is obvious, isn't it? That if you look at Jesus Christ, the life of Jesus, the works of Jesus, the words of Jesus, are the perfect mirror and revelation of God the father in heaven.

[7 : 11] Jesus is the complete, final, full, definitive revelation of God. No one has ever seen God. All our opinions about God are at best opinions.

But the only son who is at the father's side, he has made him known. So all the revelation of God now comes to us through Jesus Christ. And all our access to God goes to God through Jesus Christ.

Remember in chapter 14, later on in John's gospel, one of the 12 said to Jesus, Oh look, if only we could see God. Would you just show him to us? Remember Jesus' response? He says, have I been with you for so long?

And you still don't know me, Philip. Whoever has seen me has seen the father. So if you want to see God the father, look at Jesus.

You want to know God? Know Jesus. Listen to him. If you want his grace and power, there it is. It's all in Jesus Christ. It's the majesty. Just that claim of divine knowledge is enormous.

[8 : 21] Well look at another claim. His claim to have power over life and death. There's a book written by Richard Baucom recently. He's a wonderful scholar called Jesus and the God of Israel.

He says that in the Old Testament, God identifies, reveals his identity with reference to the whole of reality in two ways. That he is the creator of all things and that he is the ruler.

He is the source and he is the sovereign. He has the power of life and he has the power of judgment. And the uniqueness of the God of Israel is in this, sole creator, sole ruler of all things.

And to worship God is to recognize the exclusive uniqueness of his identity. What Jesus does in verse 21 and 22 is he makes direct identification between himself and this one God.

He includes himself in God's unique divine creating power and his unique divine sovereignty. That's what we mean when we say Jesus is Lord.

[9 : 29] Just look back at those verses for a moment. I have to read them. Verse 21. As the father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the son gives life to whom he will.

The father judges no one but has given all judgment to the son. Jesus is not boasting. He is telling us who God is.

It's not just an explanation of his powerful signs. Jesus is telling us who he is. And there's absolutely no interest in the abstract intellectual notions of the divine nature.

Jesus is simply talking about the true identity of the true God. Jesus regards himself, and this is the word of Bauchem, as intrinsic to the unique identity of God.

Jesus raises the dead and gives them life, literally makes life to whom he wishes. You know, we hear a lot today about the search for life and the amazing work done in gene manipulation and DNA sequencing.

[10:38] We'll never be able to make life. We can manipulate what God has made like Lego blocks, but life is in his hands to give and to take. And although to God alone belonged judgment, he has given all judgment to the son.

Which means what we are doing as Christians in Vancouver is not inviting people to pay attention to Jesus. We're telling people that everyone will meet Jesus on the day.

The great good news of the gospel is that he's already come as Savior and Judge to give us eternal life so that we never have to come into judgment. And then Jesus makes one application of this astonishing majesty.

And it's verse 23. So if this is the true identity of God, Father and Son, we are not depriving God of glory when we give glory to Jesus.

It's just the opposite. Jesus is saying it is impossible to honor God apart from honoring his son.

Glorifying Jesus is precisely what glorifies God the Father.

[12:04] Worshipping Jesus is how we worship God the Father. The Father has put his son forward. He wants to be known in his son. He calls us to worship the son.

And our work is to seek the face of God the Father in the face of Jesus Christ. To behold the majesty and the glory and the power of God in Christ. And we don't have time to deal with this now. But you can see how sharp the implications are and how offensive they are in our context. I mean, what do we say to our Jewish friends, our lovely Jewish friends, or our Buddhist friends, or our agnostic friends?

Despite our deep desire to create a middle ground, Jesus just sweeps away all middle ground and says, whoever doesn't honor the Son, doesn't honor the Father who sent him. Our attitude to Jesus is exactly our attitude to God.

If someone says to you, I love God, but I've got no time for Jesus. Jesus is saying here, that's a lie. What does it mean to honor the Son? We'll come to that in the second application.

[13:10] But I want to move to the second part, the second emphasis in the passage. I want to move from the height of the majesty to the humility and modesty of the Son.

Because despite the astonishingly high claims of identity with God, I think the emphasis is humility and modesty.

The accusation against Jesus is that he was making himself equal with God. And do you notice what Jesus does? He goes a completely different direction. He's not interested in equality. And I know equality is very close to the heart of our current cultural narrative.

In some fields, it's become a kind of unchallengeable fetish and assumption. And historically, the idea of equality comes out of Christian understanding.

Human beings are created to be the image of God. We all stand before God with no advantages. And God is against favoritism and inequity and injustice.

[14:21] So equality before the law and before the government come out of the gospel. But here, Jesus subverts the narrative of equality.

For Jesus, there is a higher way than equality. It is the way of submission. Not the way of independence and autonomy and individualism, but loving submission to the will of the Father.

So as soon as he is accused of making himself equal with God, Jesus shifts the conversation away from equality to speak about what? He speaks about the love and the communion between himself and the Father, of the giving and sharing, and of his submission and obedience to the Father.

He could easily have said, of course I'm equal. Haven't you been watching? He could have said, the Father and I perfectly partake equally in all things that belong to deity, equal in glory and majesty, co-eternal, co-equal, as we said in the creed.

But look what he does say in verse 19. This is the first thing Jesus says to that accusation. Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing.

[15:40] He's not saying I'm weak or I'm imperfect or I'm less than God, but he wants us to understand his glory and his joy in obeying the will of God, our Father in heaven.

He wants us to know who God is in relationship between the Father and the Son. So just take the two majestic claims we looked at, the claim to divine knowledge.

The claim to divine knowledge is more about the love and communion between the Father and the Son. Look back at verse 19, the second half. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.

For, because, what's the basis? The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. Stay with me, please.

Jesus is not interested in naked deity. He's interested in how the Father loves him and how he submits to the Father. Of course, he's equal in glory and divinity and eternity, but Jesus doesn't assert his independence from God, but he joyfully confesses his submission and dependence on the Father.

[16:55] And the Father's love for the Son expresses itself in revealing, and the Son's love reveals itself for the Father in obedient submission. What that means is that all the love that God has, all the love and power of God, which is revealed to us in Jesus Christ, this is a great point, it depends, in the first instance, not on God's love for us, but it depends upon the Father's love for the Son, and the Son's love for the Father, which I think is fabulous.

So when we get to chapter 14, Jesus explains why he dies on the cross, and he says this, I do as the Father command me, speaking about dying, so that the world may know that I love the Father. This is where the emphasis is. It's so important to Jesus that we grasp this mutual love between the Father and the Son. Everything we know about God is based on love, love of the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father, and their love for us.

And love is the perfect basis of spiritual knowing and truth. And that is why the revelation of God has to be answered by love. Because the knowledge of God is not cold, intellectual, or dry, objective.

It's existential and warm and gripping. You know, you cannot say we've received the revelation of God until we receive it with love.

[18:29] That's the only way we can receive it. Until we love the truth. We can't know God heartily or authentically if we're just interested in right content and ticking the boxes here.

The revelation of God comes to us out of deep eternal communion between the Father and the Son. And he is drawing us into the same communion and love.

Sometime during the last century, I took a degree at university. And my philosophy professor did a lecture on traditional Christian theism.

It's a wonderful sweep of what Christians believe over the centuries. I was most encouraged. Except he's the chair of the Australian Atheist Foundation.

He didn't believe a word of it. John says later, Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

[19:31] And we've come to know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

You see, the majestic claim to divine knowledge is really about the communion of the Father and the Son. So no matter how difficult and confronting we may find the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, in the end, it comes from love, it's to be received in love, it's delivered in love.

It is the same emphasis with the second massive claim about the power in life and death. You just look down at those verses again, 21 and 22. Jesus doesn't just say the Son gives life to who he wills.

He says, As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son. Jesus doesn't just say, All power, I have all power of all judgment, but he says, The Father has given all judgment to the Son. It's joyful subordination. The Father and the Son are two persons, two different roles. The Father sends, the Father initiates, the Father directs, the Father gives, the Son responds, the Son obeys, he receives and performs the Father's will and Jesus revels in his submission to the Father.

[20:58] You'll see it as we go through John's Gospel, that his submission and his subordination to the Father in no way diminishes his honour, but he sees, Jesus sees it raising his honour.

So I think the point of this passage is not so much equality. Jesus is not saying, I'm very powerful. It's that the Son works, the Father works, but their work is not symmetrical.

It's not interchangeable. And the point of it is this, that our redemption flows out of who God is. And here is the implication of this second point that Jesus makes and it's verse 24.

And I think we ought to commission Jeremy to make a song out of this verse. It's worth memorising. Truly, truly, Jesus says, I say to you, this is the conclusion to these verses, 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. Jesus is saying, all that I have been saying has very practical implications for you in three time zones.

[22 : 14] that the path of my life is the path of joy through submission to the Father, by giving honour to the Father, and the path for us to eternal life is also the way of submission.

You see the logic? How do we honour God, the Father? By honouring the Son. How do we honour the Son? By hearing Jesus' words and believing him who sent me.

So, submission to the Father for us is listening, carefully attending, hearing the words of Jesus and relying on and trusting God the Father.

And when we do that, Jesus says, eternity enters our lives. The astonishing majesty and modesty of the Lord Jesus leads to these very concrete results.

It leads us, our lives, out of just a mundane uniformity of flat one day after another, but it gives a shape to our lives. And I think the way, and I want to finish with this, the most helpful question for this verse is the question, when?

[23 : 24] There's a past tense, a present tense, and a future tense. Because to hear the words of Jesus and to trust the Father changes the past, changes the future and changes the present.

Let's just look at those. What does it do to the past? Look at verse 24. He who hears my word and believes him who sent me has passed from death to life.

The word is a location word. It's a place word. Bron and I have moved a couple of times in the last couple of years. We still receive mail despite the fact that we've redirected our mail at the old addresses.

This change of address is the most extreme and most profound we could have. See, if I were to die, your mail would not be able to reach me.

If I were to die and to be raised, I move into a new location from death to life, it would be doubly impossible. See, for Jesus to, for those of us who hear the words of Jesus and place the trust in the Father, the timing of this move is crucial.

[24 : 32] When did it happen? He says it happens in the past. When you first believed and it now has ongoing consequences and it's not a move in our location that we can change.

We move from death to life in the past. So how does that affect the future? Jesus says, verse 24, that person does not come into judgment.

Simple future. Since you've moved your location by trusting in Jesus Christ, your spiritual location, here is a place that it's impossible for you to go. It's to go into the judgment.

This is from the lips of the one to whom all judgment is given. His promise is that the moment we begin attending to the words of Jesus and trusting the Father, we move into a new spiritual territory of no condemnation.

Of course we deserve judgment. Christ has intervened. He has taken all our judgment for us. And the free forgiveness of our sins is not based on how we feel.

[25 : 37] It is the future certainty from the mouth of the one who is the judge himself. He says, you'll never face my judgment on that day. And I think that's the basis of growing in security, which is the basis of growing in submission to his will.

Past, future, present. He who hears my words and believes him who set me has eternal life. It's an emphatic present tense.

Eternal life is the present experience and enjoyment of communion with Jesus Christ. of passing from death to life, of never coming into judgment.

It doesn't begin when we die. It begins when we hear the voice of Jesus and trust his word. The life of the resurrection enters us now through his words and through believing, even though we're still in these old bodies which die.

that's why it's so great to sing this morning, on Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand.

[26 : 49] Amen.