

Order of worship for January 15th,

Prelude

Pre-service Song (8:55 am)
Welcome and Announcements

Ministry Moment: Missions and Women’s Ministries, Barbara Conley (what happened to the OCS ministry moment?)

Call to Worship: Isaiah 43:1-7 and 10-13 and Prayer

Hymn of Praise: “Holy God, We Praise Thy Name” Song # 2

Offering and Offertory

Special Music:

Message: “Life-Source!” (John 5:18-29)
By Pastor Bronson

Songs of Worship:

“Great is the Lord”	Song # 140
“How Great is our God”	Overhead
“O Lord, You’re Beautiful”	Song # 643
“Lord, Be Glorified”	Song # 186

Parting Word of Grace

Sunday Evening in the Word
Psalms of Ascent: 121
5:30 pm to 7:00 pm

“The Prayer Closet”

January 15, 2012

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”

(Colossians 4:2a)

This week let us be united in praying that:

Joel and Virginia Cook, AWANA Missionaries: We praise God for all of our Ministry Partners we have in this church who have invested in us your Awana Missionaries. As 2012 begins, please pray that our games and Bible Quizzing events will be used by God to bring people to the knowing saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ

President Obama: a new year can bring a new heart and mind with a deepened understanding and respect for the US Constitution; he will know beyond doubt the Lord will protect his family; the Lord will rule in his life and over rule for the well-being of the nation

Oroville Christian School: the faculty will be refreshed and fully focused; the students will quickly return to good discipline and respect for teachers and learning; the Lord will continue to add to the school

Military or Public Service Personnel of the Week: John Ryan, Deputy Butte County Sheriff (husband of Michelle): for overall health and peace and for safety on the job for John and his co workers

Young Adult of the Week: Emily Lundberg at UC Los Angeles (daughter of Mark & Susan): President of ProLife Group on campus—please pray for wisdom in leadership and for the group to be a positive presence; for fortitude and time management in her studies

The message today is entitled “Life Source”. We began our study of Jesus’ discourse on the relationship between Himself and the Father in John 5:18-29. That is where we are and I ask you to open your scriptures to John’s Gospel. I will read these verses once again. I have attempted to organize our thoughts to come to grips with what it is Jesus says here in six responses. I began last week with the first of those responses. I will review that in just a moment. I include v. 18 because verse 18 sets up the discussion that follows between Jesus and the Jews or the Pharisees. Please join me at v.18.

“This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill [Jesus]...” That is essential. That is their attitude; that is their response to Jesus. *“...because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.”* That is the issue through all of the rest that is said here, that is the constant issue that is in the hearts and minds of the Jews. So following on: (v.19) *“So Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.* (v.20) *For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.* (v.21) *For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.* (v.22) *The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,* (v.23) *that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.* (v.24) *Truly, truly, I say to you, 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.*

(v.25) *“Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.* (v.26) *For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.* (v.27) *And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.* (v.28) *Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice* (v.29) *and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.”*

This, when you let these words sink into your understanding you realize that you are looking at one of the fundamental doctrines that separate Christians from all others. That is the doctrine or the teaching of the Trinity. I mentioned last week and I mention again, that this is the heart of the gospel.

Let me do a little bit of review. Last week I introduced the first of the six responses. It is given in v. 19. Jesus there says that His relationship to the Father is one of complete dependence and submission. This is what he says: *“...the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.”* I pointed out that there are two kinds of obedience indicated in this statement. The one is passive obedience. This would have pleased the Jews. Jesus is saying, “Look, I do nothing on my own. I am entirely dependent upon and I am completely submissive to the Father.” The Jews would have said, “Yes, that is exactly what you should be and everyone else should be.” That is the passive obedience. But Jesus also indicates in those verses His active obedience. There He says, “I do what only God can do.” Of course that statement would drive the Jews wild. If Jesus’ clear statement of passive obedience in dependence and submission conciliated the religious sensibilities of the Jews, the equally clear statement of Jesus’ active obedience, His exercise of power, would have astounded them; in fact this is probably why they didn’t stone Him to death. They probably stood there opened mouthed that any human being would have the gall, the arrogance and perhaps the mental derangement to

stand in front of a bunch of other human beings and say, “Well, you know, I’m God.” But that is exactly what Jesus has just done.

The application of this to our lives, as I indicated last week, is that you and I need to believe God [as Jesus did]. We need to believe that we can trust Him to be actively present in us when we serve. We talked about this a bit last week. We have to have faith that when we act in faith, God will in fact work through us, that He will enable us to serve Him, and that others will encounter God in our lives even when we feel like that is impossible. I have a little phrase here: the lovely witness of terrible cookies. How many of you ever undertook to bless somebody and made a royal mess of it? Did you ever do that? Here is the example that comes most naturally to me, and you can understand this I am sure. There are times, maybe twice a year when I feel like I did a bad job preaching. (Mondays are terrible days to talk to pastors, because normally pastors on Mondays feel like living in a hole in the ground because they look at what they could have said, and they look at what they did say, and they say, “Why did I say that?”) But you would be amazed at how many times I have come to my wife and said, “O man, I feel horrid.” And somebody will come to me from the congregation and they will say to me, “Pastor, I was so blessed.” I’m thinking, “By what?” But the point is, they were blessed by God. They are not blessed by the pastor; they are blessed by God. And it is essential for me every time I presume to open this Word and I attempt to make some kind of clarifying comments, I have to believe that God is present and at work, because if He isn’t, I’d just as soon close the book and go home. The same is true for everyone in this room. Regardless of what kind of service you do for the Lord, you must believe that God is going to meet with the person that you intend to bless. Even if the cookies you made are worth the basket instead of the mouth, trust that God will bless and is actively present and desires to touch the lives of others through your submission and obedience. That is an application as we live our lives out in parallel to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus goes on in verse 20 and He adds to the picture of the complete unity between the Son and the Father. This is what he says: “*For the Father—make note of this—the Father loves the Son and shows Him all that He himself is doing.*” Now remember that it is important as we read this entire section that Jesus is trying to help us understand the relationship between God the Father and Himself as God the Son. Here He is giving us an extremely important part of that relationship. What He says is, the Father loves Me. How does He demonstrate that love? By showing to Me all that He does, so that I can do all that He does. The Father’s will is that the Son will be equal to the Father. The Father’s will is that you and I will see that the Son is equal to the Father. That is essential, because and I only know the Father through the Son. That is it! So you and I have to have complete inner confidence that when we look on Jesus we are seeing the Father. Remember what Jesus said to Philip in the fourteenth chapter of John’s Gospel? Philip says, “Show us the Father, Jesus, and we will be happy.” Jesus said, “I have been with you so long and you don’t realize that when you see Me you see the Father?” So this relationship is essential.

It is essential that we understand here that the Son is submissive to the Father, but the Son is also equal to the Father. The combination of those two statements is almost incomprehensible in our culture. We are persuaded that to be both submissive to and equal to at the same time is impossible, but this lies at the heart of the relationship between Jesus and His Father; and not surprisingly it challenges us very deeply in our self-understanding. We are told, as I mentioned last week, in Hebrews 1:3 that the Son is the radiance of the glory and the exact imprint of God’s nature.

There is an application to this as well: every parent should desire to raise up their child to be equal. Every child should understand that the reason a parent wants them to be submissive in learning what the parent knows is so that eventually the child will be equal in all ways. This too lies at the heart of our relationship with God as demonstrated by the relationship between Jesus and the Father.

Jesus goes on immediately to say that the Father will then show even greater works, specifically so that the Jews or the Pharisees will marvel. It is not immediately obvious why Jesus adds this statement other than the fact that it is true. He wants them to marvel. But what happens with this statement is that you and I, if we have been tracking right straight through the Gospel [of John], [we encounter] the problem once again with signs and wonders, those things that move us to marvel. We ask ourselves, “Did the Jews need to know that there was more evidence to come?” Do we need more evidence regarding who Jesus is and what He can do? There is more evidence if you know the gospels. We know that so far in the Gospel of John we haven’t heard anything about Jesus feeding the multitude, or walking on water or stilling the storm or raising Lazarus from the dead. All of those are yet to come. So there is lots yet that will be unfolded before the eyes of these Jews that will cause them to marvel. But if you recall John 4:48, you might remember that Jesus made this comment to the official of Herod whose son was dying. He said to him, “*Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe.*” I pointed out then that this was a complaint. Jesus knows that the Jew’s demand for signs and wonders springs from unbelief and does not prepare the heart for faith. In your questions you will see that the second question on the insert [at end of text] I ask if there is a difference between good doubt and bad doubt. Indeed there is. The doubt in the hearts of these Jews did not prepare their hearts to receive and believe what Jesus had to say. But guess what folks, although Jesus knows that the hearts of these people are so resistant and hardened against Him that they will not believe what He has to say and will not receive the testimony of the works that He does, He still does them. Why?

I want us to think for a little moment about what it means to marvel. How many of you take occasion now and then to look at the sunsets off to the west? What is your response? The other day I was sitting in the Living Room, reading a book, and my wife was in the laundry doing what she is supposed to do... And I said to her, “Nini, come out here! You have got to look at the sunset”. And when you do, you stand there—and I did before I called her, I wept—this is so incredibly beautiful! The hoped for effect of marveling is to shift one’s focus from self to whatever it is that you see. And in shifting away from self, even if only for a moment, it opens the heart up to realities of truth, beauty and power that might in fact soften the heart and render the mind capable of understanding, it is not all about me, it is all about God. So God continues to reach out even to the hard hearted.

I want to come to the second response. In verse 21 Jesus continues and He makes this comment: “*For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.*” Now here is a marvel. Jesus’ words direct us first of all to the resurrection. You and I knowing the end of the story, as it were, we know that His life was going to lead Him to the cross where He will be executed and into the grave because He is dead and then out of the grave because He is alive, irrepressibly alive. And that is the marvel. Jesus is the death conqueror, and through His death, which was given in satisfaction of the Law, He gains the right, He says, to give life to all who accept by faith His death for their sins. He gains that right.

Looking at this we should understand that the Jews with whom He is speaking would have no problem at all of grasping that God the Father is able to give life to whomever. That has already occurred in the course of the Old Testament. If you look in Deuteronomy 32:39, this is what we are told. Moses writes, “*See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me* – did you hear that? It is essential – “*See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.*” We had that echoed of course in [the call to worship from] Isaiah this morning. For the Jews the marvel was not that someone could be raised from the dead. The marvel was the claim that someone other than God can do this. Hear it again. Deuteronomy 32:39, “*There is no god beside me. . .*” Notice again how the statement ends by Jesus: “*The Son gives life to whom he will.*” The emphasis is there [at the end]. It would have driven the Jews wild, because what He is saying is, “I am the God beside God.” That you and I must believe, for this is the heart of the gospel.

This has implications. Before we go on we have to deal with another aspect of this marvel. Jesus’ words here touch on the mystery of divine election. When you read these words you begin to recognize there are some truths that unfold. The first is that it is God and not us that takes the initiative in our salvation. The second is that necessarily therefore it is God who chooses those who will be saved. Few aspects of the Bible’s teaching are more troublesome to people than this, along with the idea that whether or not we are saved we are answerable to God. I want us to think about this for a little bit.

You and I know that we live in a lawful universe. This is obvious. All scientific research and knowledge is built solely on the foundation of the empirically demonstrated relations of cause and effect and the constants which describe the way matter actually work. Some recently – maybe you realize this – how many of you know that they have recently begun to think they have found particles that move faster than the speed of light? This is earthquake stuff. This is like, whoa, the whole of Einstein’s theory of relativity suddenly gets turned and maybe it’s not true! But that’s not true! How many of you remember a guy named Isaac Newton? He described reality by mathematical formulas before Einstein. How many think that Isaac Newton is no longer true? No, he is just as true as he always was. The only difference is that you and I – well, somebody else but not I – is able to examine reality more and more carefully and closely and examining more and more deeply into the details to discover what: That we live in a lawful universe! I have a perfect illustration of this. Every year almost I have to fly someplace. How many fly someplace? How many of you don’t believe that we live in a lawful universe? Do not fly! Every time I get on the airplane I know that it’s my responsibility to worry and make sure the airplane doesn’t fall apart. I do this, this is not a joke. I sit there and the minute they turn on those jet engines I say, OK, this is a lawful universe. The engineers are not dumb. They carefully examine the way reality works and they put together the parts and pieces of this airplane so that it will hang together. All right: God, you and I are agreed that this is going to be OK. Then I pray for His grace, because though God makes no mistakes, men do. There is no one, bar none, no one who does not believe in a lawful universe. Anybody who pretends differently is lying, but there are implications:

It is important for us to understand that we discover and we do not make up these laws and impose them on the world around us: [we discover them because they are objectively true]. There is, however, a remarkable difference of mind when it comes to moral choice. We prefer clarity in material facts. We shun clarity in moral choices. We know by experience that we are free to choose. However, we also know that “free” does not mean “without reason” or “irrational”. We know by experience that there is a tremendous difference between “good choices” and “luck”. I won’t ask how many of you buy lottery tickets; no lottery

ticket is a good choice, even if it is lucky. Why is that; because we know full well that good choices are rational, they are well reasoned, they are not random. We know that wisdom and maturity come from and support good, well-reasoned choices. We know this. We can deny it when convenient or necessary, but we know it is true. Further, we know that our choices are not random even if they look as if they are. Let me go a step further: we know through research that what looks to be irrational or totally random behavior in people is not more but less free. It is more tightly caused by non-rational factors in those studied. Put differently, the behavior of people who have lost their rational faculties, or are driven by fears and desires outside of rational control, that kind of behavior is very predictable, far more so generally than what we would call normal behavior. Irrational behavior is usually compulsive.

Now we begin to face a dilemma in understanding human behavior. You and I rightly reject the idea of materialistic determinism as if we were no more than billiard balls bouncing, even if ricocheting in highly complex ways. But the idea of actions or choices without any rational or reasoned basis is equally contrary both to our experience and our understanding. We do not like people who act irrationally. How do we reconcile these things? The answer I believe which lies between these two is the realization that freely (that is, not determined or controlled by material forces or overpowering emotion) freely choosing creatures live in a moral universe, and these moral laws are no less absolute, no less certain even if they are not deterministic in the way that the laws of matter are.

Now I am going to go further. As long as we are reasonable, everything should work out just fine. Isn't that true? Think: how many have seen those brilliant bumper stickers that say, “Make love, not war!” or “Choose Peace”? I am all for that. [But] I don't know what it means; it is almost incomprehensible! Why is it incomprehensible? It is not because it is not a good idea. It is because of who we are. Human beings are both rebellious and proud. They are willful; they want their own way. But at the same time they are unable to act consistently even with what they believe to be true and in the pursuit of what they really desire. How do I know that? Because I am sixty six years old. I have lived that reality, and so do you.

Beyond this, we intuitively know that there is good and there is evil. We know that. We intuitively know it. Furthermore, we know that we desire justice as much as we desire truth. We know that these are moral categories. There is something else we know. They are moral categories, but if there is no standard that differentiates between good and evil, true and false, just and unjust, if there is no standard, these intuitions are meaningless. And if there is no one to enforce the standard, it is a joke. The United States is currently in a consistent attempt to eliminate all standards of morality. We cannot live without moral law.

Here is a book: if you are interested write it down, “Socrates in the City”. [In the book] Mr. Wright talks about “echoes of a voice.” I am just going to give you the four echoes. In our experience of life we experience these four different voices that speak to us out of our own experience and those of others. The first is justice. How many raise children? How many have noticed: “That's not...fair!” Nobody teaches a child of the reality of the total injustice of their older brother. But every child that has an older brother knows that this is an oppressive tyrant that needs to be restrained by some kind of moral order. And the younger brother is quite willing to fill that role, given the opportunity! The second is “spirituality”. We know there is more than we see. The third is “relationships”. We hunger for what most disappoints us. I have said before, no one will hurt you as deeply as those you love. Lastly, [there is] beauty; that is what I talked about with the sunset. Justice and relationships clearly are moral realms even if we have learned to

not use moral categories but only legal and psychological one as we are programed by the secularist elite that dominates the age. Spirituality obviously has moral elements. But is beauty, moral?

If I understand Jesus, He tells us this, that what the heart loves, what brings delight to the soul, what the eye yearns to see and the ear to hear, these reveal the condition of the heart. Because that is so, we are confronted with the reality that we are moral creatures in all that we do. Because we are moral creatures, we are sinners. Because we know we do what is wrong: we know it. And because we are sinners, we need a savior.

John 5:21 Jesus says, “I am the One who gives life.” Jesus is the Life-Source. My prayer is that if you do not know this source, you will not wait another day to bend the knee and the heart and ask this life giver to bring the blessings of His forgiveness and renewal that He might bring you to God, even Jesus Himself.

Please pray with me: Father in heaven, thank you for your word, thank you for your Son, thank you for your love for us. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Questions for Understanding and Application:

1. Why is it generally so difficult to accept that one who submits to another is still equal? What makes raising children to be your equal challenging?
2. Is there a difference between “good” doubt and “bad” doubt?
3. What is the problem people have with the doctrine of election or predestination?
4. Why is it important to realize that we discover rather than make up the laws of nature?
5. Do you agree that people shun clarity in moral choices?
6. What does it mean to say that a choice is free?
7. Which is free, the reasoned choice or the irrational choice?
8. “Humans are both rebellious and proud; they are willful – wanting their own way – and weak – unable to be consistent even with what they believe and in pursuing what they desire.” Does this seem like an accurate and fair description of the way people are?
9. Are children spontaneously moral creatures? Why do adults seem to obscure moral truth?
10. Which of the four “Echoes of a Voice” makes the most and which the least sense to you? Is this a helpful perspective?
11. Why does God’s absolute moral purity necessitate divine election?