

John 5:1-29
Nehemiah 13:1-22
Psalm 40

"Like Father, Like Son"

May 10, 2020

As I reflected on what is going on today, I realized that Nehemiah fits better than Jeremiah.
They both make the same point.
But Nehemiah addresses the point in the context of the return from exile.

Now, in fairness, Jerusalem's exile had lasted for *70 years*
while our exile lasted fewer than *70 days*.

And no, it's not over!

Then again, Nehemiah lived *a hundred years* after the return from exile!
The Jews had been back in the promised land for a hundred years.

And things were still not back to the "old normal."
There was no king.

And yet, as Nehemiah points out – they are "back" to the old normal!
They are just as sinful as they used to be!

"Did not your fathers act in this way,
and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city?
Now you are bringing more wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath!"

We are too much like our fathers!

We will hear in John 5 of how Jesus is like *his* Father.

We can put a mask on to cover at least some part of the vapor that comes out of our mouths!
But there is no mask that can cover the stench of our sin.

Our Psalm of response is also different!
Psalm 40 in the white books.

Psalm 40 starts by speaking of how God delivers from the miry pit.

And proclaims a blessing on the one who trusts in the LORD.

The first person singular voice is the voice of the Davidic King – the voice of Jesus –

"Behold I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me:

'I delight to do you will, O my God;
your law is within my heart.'"

Jesus came to do that which we could not possibly do for ourselves.

He came to pass through death – and through his death –
to triumph over the grave.

Jesus came to *bear* our iniquity –

so that *our guilt* would be imputed to him.

If you think about it, this intermediate “return from exile”
illustrates well where we are in redemptive history!

We’re back!

We have been restored to fellowship with God!
Since we have been justified by faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ!

And yet it doesn’t quite feel like we’re back!

There’s the *already* – and the *not yet*.
We are *not yet* all that we will be – all that we long to be!

But little-by-little, more-and-more,
we are *becoming* what Christ has begun in us!

Sing Psalm 40 (PHSS)

Read John 5

Introduction: “There Was a Feast of the Jews” (v1)

“After this there was a feast...”

John structures his gospel around the various feasts.

2:13--Passover

5:1--a feast/Sabbath

6:4--Passover was near

7:2--Feast of Tabernacles

9:14--Sabbath

10:22--Feast of Dedication

11:55--Passover (final)--12:1, 12, 20; 13:1, 29; 18:28, 39; 19:14, 31, 42

Which makes it particularly significant that John highlights the *first day of the week*
in chapter 20.

If every other event in John’s gospel is connected to a feast –

so also is the resurrection of Jesus on the *first day* of the week (20:1, 19)

The Feasts were days of special celebration and worship

They were special days of rest in which all of God's people gathered
to remember what God had done in delivering his people
from bondage to slavery;

and to give thanks for all of the blessings that he had given them.

Every event in the Gospel of John happens around a Feast or a Sabbath.

And as a faithful Israelite, Jesus goes up to Jerusalem for the feast.

In chapter 4, Jesus has retreated from Jerusalem to Galilee
because he did not wish to provoke a controversy with the Pharisees
before his time.

John now takes us to a time when Jesus deliberately provoked the Jews.

And he does so in the context of “a feast of the Jews.”

Jesus is teaching us that HE is the fulfillment of the feasts:

As Paul says in Colossians 2:

"Let no one judge you in food or in drink,
or regarding a feast day or a new moon or sabbaths,
which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."

Christ is the reality to whom the feasts and sabbaths pointed.

He is the bread of heaven;

He is the living water;

He is the one in whom we worship the Father.

He gives us rest and peace from all our enemies.

And he starts it all by healing on the Sabbath.

1. Sabbath and Rest – The Healing at the Pool of Bethesda (v2-17)

a. “Do You Want to Be Healed?” – Jesus Gives Rest (v2-9)

² Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic^[a] called Bethesda,^[b] which has five roofed colonnades. ³ In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed.^[c]
⁵ One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be healed?” ⁷ The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.” ⁸ Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” ⁹ And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.

Here, in John 5, we see Jesus giving rest to his people:

He asks, “Do you want to be healed?”

The sick man replies (verse 7)

This reply caused some early scribe to add what is sometimes called verse 4.

Your translation may not have a verse 4,

but may have a footnote explaining that most of the oldest manuscripts do not have this verse.

Verse four explains what the Jews thought about the pool of Bethesda,

so it appears that an early scribe thought it would be useful to explain why the man thought it was important to get into the pool.

But instead of helping the man into the pool,
Jesus tells this man to take up his bed and walk.
So he does.

b. “Sin No More” – Jesus’ Call to Holiness (v10-14)

Now that day was the Sabbath. ¹⁰ So the Jews^[d] said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.” ¹¹ But he answered them, “The man who healed me, that man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’” ¹² They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk’?” ¹³ Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. ¹⁴ Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.”

But because it was the Sabbath, the Jews said to the man who was healed:
"It is the Sabbath! It is not lawful for you to carry your bed!"
Why did they say this?
Why did they think that it was unlawful to carry a bed on the Sabbath?

We heard about that from Nehemiah 13.

Jeremiah 17 had promised that if you keep the Sabbath,
then you will have kings and princes sitting on the throne of David.

Later, Nehemiah (13:15-19) will insist upon this
after the Israelites have returned from Exile.
God commanded his people not to carry burdens in and out of the city.
The Pharisees took this to mean that all lifting was forbidden.
So they established all sorts of rules to make sure that no one lifted anything.
But if you read Jeremiah and Nehemiah in context
(and if you consider it in light of the 4th commandment)
then it becomes perfectly clear that what is forbidden
is doing business on the Sabbath.
What sort of load would a farmer carry into a city on the Sabbath?
grain, olives, animals, etc.
What is prohibited is economic activity--not the necessary actions of everyday life!
What was this man supposed to do?
leave his bed sitting by the pool?

There were three things that a Feast Day or a Sabbath was for:

- 1) rest from your ordinary labors--your economic employment
- 2) give rest to others--especially those who are under your charge
- 3) worship God

Jesus is not breaking the Sabbath

--he is doing precisely what one should be doing on the Sabbath!
He is giving rest to this man!

And he is worshiping God,
and causing others to worship God as well!

But Jesus is doing more than showing the Pharisees that they have misunderstood the Law.

In fact, Jesus doesn't even bother explaining it to them.

Like usual in John's gospel,

Jesus's teaching doesn't seem obviously connected to the issue!

Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman have already shown us

that Jesus does not give obvious answers!

Here, Jesus heals on the Sabbath--so you'd expect a discourse about the Sabbath, right?

What does Jesus say when they come to speak against him?

"My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." (v17)

Heb 4:4 says that God entered his rest on the seventh day—

and that this rest has lasted from the creation until now.

So is God resting or working?

Jesus wants you to understand that resting on the Sabbath is NOT just sitting there

with your hands folded in your lap,

with a bored look on your face!

The Sabbath-rest that God himself observes is a rest that works!

It's a different KIND of work than the ordinary work, but it is work nonetheless.

God did his work of creation in six days, and then entered his rest

--but that rest, Jesus says, can be called "working"!

What is that "work" that God has been doing since he finished creating?

Well, what does Jesus say?

(jump forward to v19-21)

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^[e] does, that the Son does likewise. 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. ²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.

The work of God consists of giving life to the dead.

This is what God does during his Sabbath-rest!

He delivers people from bondage to sin.

And as a picture of that, Jesus heals the sick on the Sabbath.

What can we do on the Sabbath that will also be a picture of this?

How can we give rest and hope to people on Sundays?

Certainly we start this by worshiping on Sundays--but what else can we do?

It's a challenge to think about this in a time of social distancing!

But as we are doing more and more of our fellowship outdoors,
perhaps we can include our neighbors as well!

Now this man doesn't even know who Jesus is.

So when they ask him who did this, he doesn't know what to say!

But

¹⁴ Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you."

At first that may sound like Jesus is saying that bad things happen to you because you sin.

But at the heart of what Jesus is saying is that the wages of sin is death.

John reminds us regularly of the coming judgment.

What is the "something worse" that may happen if you keep sinning?

If you keep rejecting Jesus – if you keep refusing to hear him –
then indeed, something worse will likely happen!

And so this man turns away from sin and bears witness to Jesus!

c. "My Father...and I..." – Jesus' Rebuke to Those Who Will Not See (v15-17)

¹⁵ The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. ¹⁶ And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁷ But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."

But as Jesus says "My Father is working until now, and I am working",
the Jews become even more upset.

Why?

2. "Making Himself Equal with God" – The Father and the Son (v18-29)

a. The Son Imitates/Reflects the Father (v18-19)

¹⁸ This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Because by calling God his Father, he is making himself equal with God.

Listen to how Jesus responds in verse 19:

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^[e] does, that the Son does likewise.

The Son imitates the Father

You all have seen children who look like their parents.

There is a family resemblance.
The Son is the picture of the Father--"he's just a chip off the old block"

What the Father does, the Son does: (v19)
The Son sees his Father.
The Son watches his Father and learns from him.

Isn't this the way we learn?
Your kids watch you.
They learn to walk by watching their parents.
They say, "I wanna do that too!"
What happens when daddy eats a cookie before dinner?
"but mommy, daddy did it!"
Kids imitate their parents.

Even so, the Son of God imitates the Father.
He watches the Father and does what he sees his Father doing.
The Father gives life to the dead (Son)
So also the Son (us)

This teaches us something about the Trinity.
v26--The Father has life in himself
--and he has granted the Son to have life in himself.

What does it mean to have life in yourself?

We all "have" life,
but none of us have life "in ourselves"
To have life in yourself means that you are the source and origin of life.
As such, you have authority over life and death –
such that you can *give* life to whomsoever you wish.

The Father has life in himself.
And so does the Son.

But if both the Father and the Son have life in themselves,
then doesn't this mean that there are two gods?
After all, if the Father has life in himself, and the Son has life in himself,
then that means that there are two sources and origins of life, right?

Ah, but that is the secret of John 5:26.
John 5:26 does NOT say that the Son has life in himself APART from the Father;
rather, the Father has *granted* the Son to have life in himself.
There are not TWO different principles of life; there is only ONE.

The Father and the Son are not TWO gods, but ONE God.

And the Father who has life in himself,
has granted the Son to also have life in himself because they are truly one God.
The Son is fully God--but he is NOT a different God from the Father.

The Jews understood correctly that when Jesus claimed God as his Father,
he was making himself equal with God.

Therefore, if you want eternal life,
there is only one place to get it:

As Jesus says,

"I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me!"

And this is fleshed out more in verses 20-23.

b. The Son Gives Life to Whom He Will – to Those Who Believe (v20-24)

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. ²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. ²² For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, 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.

Notice the progression:

The Father loves the Son and shows him what he is doing (v20)

And the Son imitates the Father – so that just as the Father raises the dead
so also the Son gives life to whom he will (v21)

And so the Father has given all judgment to the Son – why?

So that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.

What honor are we to give to the Father?

We are to praise him and glorify him and serve him.

What is the chief end of man?

Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever!

That is the same honor we are to give to the Son!

Jesus teaches us plainly that the Son shares in the Father's glory;
and God does not allow his glory to be shared!

He told Isaiah, "I will NOT share my glory with another!"

Yet here Jesus claims to be worthy of the same honor and glory as the Father.

He is claiming, as the Jews know full well, to be God.

And Jesus warns that ALL must honor the Son JUST AS they honor the Father.

And Jesus leaves us in no doubt *how* we are to honor the Son:

Verse 24.

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.*

You must hear the Word of Jesus and believe in the Father who sent his Son.

And if you do hear His Word, and believe in the Father,
then you have passed from death to life!

As Jesus says, "the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God;
and those who hear will live"

How can the dead hear?

If you are dead, then how can hear anyone's voice?

Well, remember what Jesus has just finished saying!

The Father has given him life in himself!

If Jesus has life in himself,

then he has power over death and can even raise the dead!

This is why he says in v25

"the hour is coming and now is" (recall Samaritan woman--4:23)

The time has come, Jesus says,

this is the time that was foretold by the prophets:

this is the day of salvation:

those who were dead will now live!

c. The Son Has Life in Himself (v25-26)

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.* ²⁶ *For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.*

Again we see how important John's prologue is:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God.

Jesus is God.

But he is not the same as the Father.

He was the one who was *with the Father* in the beginning.

This is why we affirm that there are *three persons* in the Godhead!

d. The Son Will Judge the Living and the Dead (v27-29)

²⁷ *And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.* ²⁸ *Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice* 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.

And Jesus goes on to explain that this authority has been given to him by the Father.

v27-30--all judgment has been given to the Son:

Not just some judgment.

But ALL judgment.

His judgment will either fall on you now OR later.

If you hear the Word of Christ and believe in the Father who sent him,
then he will rule: "not guilty"

BUT if you reject the Word of Christ and refuse to believe,
then he will rule: "guilty"

Jesus Christ will decide who receives life and who receives death.

He is the judge who will either give life or condemnation.

You can receive life now and receive life later.

Or you can remain in death now and receive condemnation later.

You are called to see what the Father has done in and through the Son,
and so you, like the lame man,
are called to take up your bed and walk.

If you think about it – that was a crazy thing to say.

What should the man have said:

“You are nuts, Jesus! I can’t walk!”

What lameness – what crippling situation – are you holding on to?

What debilitating condition are *you* insisting that Jesus cannot heal?

Jesus comes to you and says, “Rise, take up your bed, and walk!”

And then, *keep walking!*

As Jesus said to the man he had healed,

“Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.” (5:14)

Do not return to a life of wickedness and sin.

But rather repent and believe the promises of God!

Do not insist on trying to master your own fate!

You see, Jesus did not seek his own will.

He sought to do the will of the Father who sent him.

Why?

Because he was truly the Son of God.

He was the Son of the Father,

and he did all that the Father showed him.

And now, you have been made children of God.

You have been conformed to the image of Christ.

And now God calls you to walk in that image!

"for as the Father raises the dead and give life,

even so the Son gives life to whom He will"
You have been given life by the Son.
You are no longer bound by sin and death!
Now you are called to be like your Father.
You are called to be like your big brother, Jesus Christ.
There is to be a family resemblance between us and our Father.

You must trust yourself entirely to the grace of God.
You must believe that God has made you alive with Christ!

Now – this is what baptism is all about!