

Like Father- Like Son

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[0 : 00] Well, I wonder, what would it be like to be introduced to God? Someone comes to you this evening, there's someone I'd love you to meet, they say.

Let me introduce you to him. This is God. What would that be like? What would he do? What would he say?

What would we think of him? Well, John, who wrote this book, this gospel, says to us tonight, I can do that for you. I can introduce you to God.

That's why he wrote this gospel. So, John brings us back in time, 2,000 years into a room where we see Jesus. Here he is, he says, this is him.

This is God. Hmm, you think. It's not quite what I imagined. And perhaps you feel, John, you oversold this introduction a bit.

[1 : 03] Is seeing God really the same as seeing a 2,000-year-old Jewish carpenter? Is hearing God speak really the same as hearing that man speak?

Is the things that he does, Jesus, really, are they the same as what God can do? Seeing Jesus isn't really the same as being introduced to God, is it?

Is it? Well, that's the question that John wants us all to be able to answer when we close this book this evening.

We've had a break as a church from John's gospel for a couple of months. And if you were here with us for John chapters 1 to 4, you'll remember that what we saw then was Jesus bringing God's kingdom.

Out of his fullness, wrote John, we have received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

[2 : 06] He's saying what God's word promised in the past, Jesus has now come to deliver. And so, with Jesus, it is grace upon grace, new grace in place of old grace, dawning of a fresh day in the history of God's rescue.

New hearts, eternal life, a new covenant. That is a new relationship with God. And we saw different people, very different people, receive that eternal life he came to bring.

Nathaniel, the cynic, Nicodemus, the academic, the Samaritan woman on the outside, a whole village of outsiders.

The official who trusted in Jesus' life-giving word. All of them came face to face with Jesus and he gave new life in place of sin and death.

And he can do what he does, says John, because of who he is. Jesus, again, chapter 1, no one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God, and is in the closest relationship to the Father, he has made him known.

[3 : 18] So, asked John, you want to know God? Well, let me introduce you to Jesus. Because as we'll see this evening, with God and Jesus, it is in the truest possible sense, like Father, like Son.

Firstly, then, Jesus gives us a sign that shows us that that is indeed who he is, because he is the one who gives true Sabbath rest. Sometime later, after the events of chapters 1 to 4, we're not told how long Jesus goes to Jerusalem.

He goes there lots of times in this gospel, often on a special day in the Jewish calendar. And we're often told which festival that was. We're not told this time. It's just one of the festivals, because the special day at the heart of this visit is the Sabbath.

The Sabbath. And that's important for two reasons. Firstly, because of what Jesus does on the Sabbath. There was a pool in Jerusalem, verse 3, where a great number of disabled people used to lie.

The blind, the lame, the paralyzed. And they lay there day by day in the desperate hope of being healed. A few later manuscripts explain that it was thought that an angel would come down and stir up the water.

[4 : 40] And the idea was that if you could get into the water at that time, you would come out healed. So imagine spending your life waiting for that day, day by day by day to happen.

Not shifting from the spot. Just hoping desperately that when that day finally came, you would be the one to make it into the water and be healed. Now just have a glance down at verse 5.

One who was there had been an invalid for 38 years. 38 years. That's longer than some of us. Many of us have been alive. Hoping. Waiting. 38 isn't a nice round number, is it? The kind of number you would make up if you were inventing a story.

Now here's a real man who'd spent 38 years of his life paralyzed. Physically and spiritually, we might say. He's stuck there in every sense of the word.

[5 : 43] Just hoping. Waiting. And notice Jesus' compassion for him. In verse 6. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned he had been in this condition for a long time.

He asked him, Do you want to get well? See, Jesus isn't pulling a stunt here. You're asking someone to come down from the audience to be healed.

He knows, doesn't he? And he cares that this man has been waiting an awfully long time. Jesus cares about that. And so this is a compassionate healing.

It's an act of love. Now perhaps the man was thinking that Jesus would help him be healed in the water. I've got no one to help me, he says. So I can't get into the water.

But Jesus isn't there to help him find hope somehow, some way, one day. He is his hope. And so he simply speaks and heals him.

[6 : 43] Jesus said to him, Get up, pick up your mat and walk. At once the man was cured. He picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath.

See, this healing is a wonderful work in its own right. But we've seen Jesus heal with a word before, haven't we? A few verses before this, the man who came to Jesus saying, My son is at the point of death.

Jesus raised him to life again simply by saying to this dad, Your son will live. We know Jesus can do that. What John wants us to see here is that Jesus gives the ultimate rest and renewal that the Sabbath had always promised and pointed to.

See, in Isaiah chapter 35, we read about those same people, the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. And Isaiah looks forward to a day when God himself will come to rescue his hoping and waiting people.

He will come to save you, he writes. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer and the mute sing for joy.

[7 : 56] Creation itself will be renewed. The damage done by the fall will be undone. Those broken in body and spirit will be made whole because the time has come for God to come and save.

That's the kind of supreme and ultimate rest that the Sabbath day, a day of rest, promises us. Rest ultimately from the fall.

And so in healing this man's body on the Sabbath, Jesus is giving a taste of who he is and what he has come to do. He is God bringing his kingdom into the world.

So we could think of this healing, if you like, a bit like a show home on a building site. Everything around is carnage and earthworks and dirt and mess.

But what's one of the first things that the developers do? Well, right in the middle of the chaos, they build a great new house, don't they? A wonderful new house so that people can come and see and touch and smell what the whole site is all going to be like when it's finished.

[9 : 10] And in the same way, this healing lets us see and feel the promise of a whole new creation built by the words of Jesus. We touched on this this morning.

This is a sign of things to come because this healing tells us Jesus is God's son bringing God's kingdom. But this good news, it doesn't go down well with everyone, does it?

Which brings us to our second point. If that's the sign, well, Jesus goes on to give his explanation. And the explanation is this. He is equal with God.

This is our longest point this evening. Jesus' explanation, that he is equal with God. Verse 10 introduces us to the Jewish leaders. And what's the first thing they say to this guy, once paralyzed and now walking?

Look there in verse 10. It is the Sabbath. The law forbids you from carrying your mat. Now, I hope, even if this is the first time that you have read the Bible, you're thinking, what on earth?

[10:19] How hard-hearted do you have to be to beat this guy down for picking up his mat, who has just stood up after 38 years of being paralyzed? Later, we're going to see how their hearts grew so hard.

But it's clear for now that in the words of one writer, these Jewish leaders, had turned the Sabbath day into an end in itself rather than a day to worship God himself. Because if they had been interested at all in worshiping God, indeed, if they loved God, Jesus will go on to say, they would have recognized his fingerprints all over this wonderful work.

And they would have turned to the one who had just done it, his son. But they don't. Why don't they? It's the obvious thing to do, isn't it, for them?

For me? For you? But instead, they go on a witch hunt for this so-called Sabbath breaker. And so, verse 16, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him.

But if they had a problem with what Jesus did on the Sabbath, they are going to lose it when they find out why he did it. Here's the bombshell in verse 17.

[11:34] In his defense, Jesus said to them, My father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working. You feel that?

Bombshell? God is my father, he says. And this is what he does on the Sabbath, and so it is what I do too. You see how earth-shakingly and paradigm-shatteringly serious that is, what he has said. His enemies didn't like it, but at least they got how serious it was. So you look at verse 18. For this reason, they tried all the more to kill him.

Not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own father, making himself equal with God. Equal with God.

If God can do it, well, so can I, says Jesus. Who does this guy think he is? Didn't we see last week in Isaiah that God is beyond compare?

[12:34] He is without equal. How can Jesus compare himself to God? Well, listen to his explanation. This is who Jesus says he is.

Verse 19, Very truly I tell you, the son can do nothing by himself. He can only do 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. He is his father's son, he says. His father's son.

The father shows the son everything he does, and the son sees what the father does, and he does it too. If you have a toddler at home, perhaps you have had one, or perhaps the children at church. At some point you've turned around, and you've found them watching what you're doing, and copying you doing it, doing it with you. At our old church, we used to have to move lots of tables and chairs every week, and sometimes you turn around and find a little person hanging off the end of whatever it was that you were carrying.

[13:46] And it's sweet, isn't it? They're fascinated with you. And so you show them what you're doing, you tell them about it, because you're fascinated in them too. And that's a special moment to share, isn't it?

A bond, yet so brief, so imperfect. But now think of that eternal love in God himself. The son captivated by the father.

The father captivated by the son. They cannot take their eyes off each other. The son only does what he sees his father doing.

The father shows the son everything that he's doing, and the result is that whatever the father does, the son also does. And so we can say supremely and ultimately and perfectly of God and Jesus, like father, like son.

Just let that sink in. Jesus is saying he doesn't bear a passing resemblance to God. As the book of Hebrews tells us, he is the exact imprint of God's nature.

[15:00] So as Jesus himself will say later, to look at the son, to look at Jesus is to see the father. Mind-blowing, isn't it? Hang on, you say, if the son is only doing what the father shows him to do, well, doesn't that make him somehow less than God?

He himself says he can do nothing by himself. But in fact, this is exactly what makes him equal with God, and therefore God himself, because Jesus is doing what only God can do.

Look at his work in verse 21. 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.

Father gives life, the son gives life, back from the dead life, resurrection life. He brings a new creation, where before there has been chaos and sin and death.

That is something that only God does. But we've seen Jesus do that, haven't we, in this gospel? Speak and give life with a word.

[16:07] Very truly, I tell you, verse 26, the time is coming and has now come, he says, when the dead will hear the voice of the son of God, and those who hear will live. He's just speaking there about what he's been doing.

Those dead in sin are being brought to life in him. And Jesus has done that for us, hasn't he? Brothers and sisters, if we're Christians. Jesus did that when his word at long last sank in. And our cold, dead hearts began to beat again, and the veins of our soul filled with new life. Jesus gives life from the dead.

Friends, please know if Jesus hasn't done that for you yet, he can. He can do that for you tonight, if you would only put your trust in him to do it for you.

Perhaps that you're thinking, this sounds all very spiritual. Well, don't worry, says Jesus, if this sounds overly spiritual, verse 28, well, a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out.

[17:16] He gives spiritual life now, but one day he says he will speak, and those who are physically dead will rise bodily from their graves at the sound of his voice.

Perhaps this is unfamiliar territory for some of us, but the Bible teaches that when Jesus comes back, we will all rise bodily from the dead.

Like a judge coming into a chamber, what does the clerk say? All rise. Well, so it will be when the judge comes back into his world.

For everyone who has ever lived, all rise. For as well as giving life, the other thing that Jesus does that only God can do is judge.

Look at that, verse 22. The Father judges no one, he says, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son. Friends, who will we give an answer to on the last day?

[18:15] Who will sit on his glorious throne with the world, the living and the dead, gathered before him? Who is it who will send everyone either to eternal life or eternal condemnation?

Not the Father, but the Son, Jesus. He was born in a stable. He lived, who died and rose again.

Paul says in Acts chapter 17, the proof that God will judge the world is the fact that he has brought the judge back from the dead to do it. But why do we trust him to do that perfectly on that day?

We trust him to judge perfectly because he is not like us. No, he is not a flawed or self-interested or ignorant judge, but he is doing exactly what his Father has shown him.

Verse 30, I judge only as I hear and my judgment is just, but I seek not to please myself, but him who sent me. Like Father, like Son.

[19:26] Even down to the very essence of their being, their life. As the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. That is intrinsic life, life that has no outside source or origin.

Like a flame that never burns out from which every candle in the universe is lit. That is the life of God. And here Jesus says, that's his life too.

What an answer that is to the question, why are you working on the Sabbath? Because I am God's one and only Son, he says. My Father is working and I am working too.

So what are we meant to do with that? Well, since Jesus is equal with God and is God and is God's Son, we are to receive him and believe in him.

That is why he does God's work, says Jesus. Glance down with me at verse 22. Why does Jesus do what he does? Why has the Father given his Son these works to do that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father?

[20:41] Whoever does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him. In short, we cannot worship God without worshipping Jesus.

We cannot have God without having Jesus. Lots of people would rather think that if there was a God, there must be lots of different ways to him.

Jesus is fine for you, but this is what works for me. But if it is true, if it is like Father, like Son, with God and Jesus, well, how can we come to God without coming to Jesus?

Friends, if Christianity is new to you this evening, this is a lot to take in. I'll admit that. But if this is new to you, please know that what we are talking about is not religion as usual. It's not vague ideas and nice hopes and good deeds. True religion is Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. A living, breathing person who is God's eternal Son.

[21 : 43] Nobody comes to the Father, says Jesus, except through me. That's not Christians saying that. That's Jesus saying that.

And we each have to reckon with his claim to be the only way. I do, you do. Brothers and sisters, what about you and me? Do we honor the Son just as we honor the Father?

Do we give Jesus the honor he deserves? If what he said is true, we cannot even think of God without thinking of Jesus, can we? We should hang off his every word.

We should cling to his every work. You know, how incredible is it that we have not one or two or three but four written records of his life, his works, and his words, what he did on earth?

Are these Gospels not our daily bread as Christians? How can we live without him? Because the way Jesus wants us to honor him, first and foremost, is by receiving his words and so believing in him.

[22 : 51] Very truly, I tell you, says, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but is crossed from death to life.

Hear, he says, my life-giving words and believe that I am who I say I am because whoever, whoever believes in him has eternal life will not be judged.

Judgment is gone but has come from death to life. So says the life-giver and the judge. And so he is the one that we must turn to, must listen to, must trust.

Perhaps this evening you've never done that before. Well, here's an opportunity in response to what Jesus is saying to us to do that. He alone can save us from God's judgment and give us life.

But perhaps you think, well, that's fine but we only have his word to go on, don't we? He can say what he likes about himself but it doesn't have to be true. And so finally and more briefly, Jesus gives us evidence of this truth and he invites us to trust the witness.

[24 : 08] Again, put yourself in the courtroom except now it's not Jesus the judge but Jesus the defendant. And what happens when the court sits? Well, the defense calls its witnesses.

And Jesus, if you like, calls one witness in three forms. Verse 32 says, there's another who testifies in my favor and I know his testimony about me is true.

And we see verse 37, he's talking there about the father who sent him. And the father has given evidence, if you like, in the form of John the Baptist, he says. You sent to John and he told you the truth.

We saw lots of John the Baptist before, earlier in this gospel. And Jesus just mentions him in passing to remind us that we have heard him and what he said was true.

But the father's given weightier evidence than that, he says, in the form of what he gave Jesus to do. The very works I'm doing, he says, testify that the father has sent me.

[25 : 11] That healing, that sign we saw before, for instance, is evidence of who Jesus is. He is clearly God's son doing God's work.

And finally, the father has given evidence in the form of the scriptures themselves, verse 39.

Speaking to the Jewish leaders, let's remember, you study the scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life.

These are the very scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. What does Jesus say the Bible is all about?

What is Genesis or Leviticus or the Psalms or Ruth or Jonah? What are they about? Well, Jesus is saying the books these people spent their lives studying are about him.

That totally puts through the shredder, doesn't it? Lots of the ways that people have read the Bible through the ages as a rule book, as a book about good examples, as a book of random stories.

[26 : 17] In the words of the Jesus storybook Bible, every story whispers his name. It is about him. Yet, yet as with the Sabbath, so with the scriptures, the Jewish leaders had turned them into ends in themselves rather than fingers pointing to Christ.

Friends, this is how their hearts had become so hard. If they had trusted and loved God, they would have recognized Jesus as his son and turned to him in faith. But over the years, they had had God's word open in front of them and turned away from what he has said.

They closed their hearts to what God was saying in his word about his son. And so, when he finally came, the word made flesh. Well, what did they do? It was inevitable. They locked their hearts against him.

Friends, the Bible is a precious, precious gift, isn't it? But it cannot give us life. It cannot give us life if we refuse to come to the life giver that it points to.

We can read the Bible as long as we like, but if we do not follow it all the way to Jesus, it will do us no good. Perhaps you know your Bible, perhaps you grew up with it or had it in your life for years, but you have still not come to Jesus.

[27 : 41] Let me say tonight, that is a tragedy. It doesn't have to be that way. Do you hear Jesus' plea? How can you study the scriptures yet refuse to come to me that you may have life?

Friends, please don't open the Bible and turn a blind eye to Christ because he says the Bible was written to bring us to him. And in reality, if we haven't come to Christ, then we haven't really understood our Bibles, have we?

And so the question Jesus leaves us with is this, do you trust the witness? God telling us himself through his witnesses, through Christ's works, through his word, that Jesus is his son.

But indeed, to meet Jesus, to be introduced to him is to be introduced to God himself. That to believe in Jesus is to belong to God.

Do you believe him? If you're not sure about the answer, I'd love to speak to you afterwards. I'd love to hear your answer to that question because eternity rests on our answer to that question.

[28 : 52] I've heard this evening that Jesus is not only the life giver, but he is the judge. And if we do not come to him as life giver now, we will face him as judge then.

If we are not raised to eternal life now, we will be sent to eternal condemnation then. And I pray, we pray as God's people that all of us here and listening at home return to him for our rescue, for eternal life now and forever, that none of us would face him as judge and be turned away on the last day.

We've seen the sign. We've heard the explanation. We've seen the evidence. And so seeing tonight, would ye believe that Jesus is the Son of God and come to him and have life in his name? That is his invitation. So let's pray it would be so. Let's pray together. Amen. God, our Father, we thank you and praise you as the one who sent the Lord Jesus.

We thank you that in him we see what you were really like. We praise you, our Father, that in Christ you do confirm for us that you are gracious and merciful, slow to anger, full of love and faithfulness.

[30 : 27] Lord Jesus, we honor you. Lord, we thank you that you speak to us so plainly. We thank you that you give us opportunities like this to see again your glory.

Lord, forgive us when your glory fades from our eyes, from our hearts, from our lives. Lord, we pray give each of us a heart that is open to ye.

Lord, help us to love your word for what it says about ye. Lord, help us to see in your works your glory that you are indeed the Son of the Father.

We thank you, Lord, that you have given us Jesus, the image of God, the exact imprint of your nature. And Lord, we pray for those who do not as yet know him tonight, that you would draw them to yourself.

Give them life in your Son, we pray. We thank you for it is true as Norman prayed that you would have, Lord, you desire that none would be condemned, but that all would come to repentance.

[31 : 38] Lord, let it be so, for we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.