

God is Always at Work

John 5:16-30

I. God always being at work causes some to react with anger; 5:16-18.

¹⁶ So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. ¹⁷ Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." ¹⁸ For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

John tells us about Jesus' opponents and provides the reason for their anger. Jesus was viewed as indifferent and dismissive to their Sabbath laws that they said were from God. Jesus is not simply being persecuted, but His trial is already underway.

Even the Jews recognize God's constant working in the world. It is assumed that God continues to work on the Sabbath, or the world would collapse. Yet the issue for the rabbis revolved around the fact that humans are not God and therefore must not try to act like God. But here is the point. Jesus is the Son of God and therefore the representative of God. Why are not the works of Jesus on the Sabbath legitimate?

Jesus is claiming equality with God. Because of this, Jews tried even harder to kill Jesus. Therefore, the persecution and eventual death of Jesus come from Jesus' divine claims about Himself. For some, it doesn't matter if God is working, if it is not done their way.

II. Jesus is the focus of God's working in your world; 5:19-24.

¹⁹ Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. ²¹ For 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. ²² Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. ²⁴ "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

It is not that Jesus does not act independent of the Father; He cannot act independent of the Father. He can do only the things He sees the Father doing. It is the things the Father does that the Son does in virtue of His sameness of nature.

The Father loves the Son. This love spills into two tasks entrusted to the Son that belong exclusively to the Father. Jesus is sovereign over life and judgment. Those who love darkness find themselves under judgment already. Whoever believes in the Son has life already.

Jesus looks forward to doing greater works. We celebrate today one of those greater things in His resurrection from the dead. Just as the Father takes dead bodies and raises them to new life, so the Son takes people who, though their bodies are alive, are yet in a state of death, and He raises them to spiritual life.

Anyone who hears and believes has eternal life. But the words also constitute an invitation, a challenge. We are to hear Christ's call and to take the step of faith. God is still working in our world through Jesus to bring salvation and judgment.

III. God's working in Jesus will be clear when all are raised from the dead; 5:25-30.

²⁵ I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come 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 to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸ "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. ³⁰ By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

We are now introduced to the theme of resurrection. A major role of the Son in the end of humanity is His issuance of this decisive call, which summons the dead from the tombs to one of two destinies. In this decisive moment, the division that takes place will be based on what people have done with Jesus. Have they truly placed their faith in Jesus for forgiveness and accepted Him as Lord? Because believing is often superficial, the integrity of believing is to be judged by a person's activity, not merely by what a person says. The importance of human action as a litmus test of human faith commitment.

Opposition to Jesus or affirmation of Jesus and His ways have immense consequences at the end of time. In accepting His mission as judge, Jesus claimed to be just, and His defense was that He had not compromised Himself by pursuing self-interest.

How could anyone be angry with God who became a human being to offer hope, forgiveness, eternal life, and freedom from judgment? Their way of living life and telling others how to live gave them power. This was more important than what God was doing right in front of them. God is still working. Probably not in the ways you want. Let go of your expectations and get on board with what God is doing, "right now, right here."