

The Compassionate God – Part 2

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John 5:9-18

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So sadly, we've just come out of the holiday season. It's over now. You know And in many ways, big and small, it really is the most wonderful time of the year. Katie, my wife and I were saying this, that this year for some reason, we're a little sad seeing all the decorations come down and life going back to normal. Holidays are a time for feasting and family, friendship and fun. It's not just true today. That was true in the ancient times as well. And if you look at John Chapter 5, verse 1, it says, it was a holiday that brought Jesus to Jerusalem. You can picture the city. It's holiday time. It's a buzz with joy on people's faces, excitement, preparations being made for meals and guests and worship.

But I want you to notice, how did Jesus spend this holiday? What house was he going to celebrate it? Where was he going to feast? He's in the house of the sick in a kind of ancient hospital for people. Verse 3, a multitude of invalids, the blind, the lame, and the paralyzed. The location is the pool of Bethesda, a massive structure in the northeastern part of the city of Jerusalem, which is a place that Kyle and I will be a week and a half from now. The sights, the sounds, the smells that day, it must have been just pretty horrible.

But John, the author, is just a facts kind of guy. He's not really focusing on that. He's focusing on Christ because here, he is walking among people with agony, desperation, and exhaustion, plastered all over their faces. They were there preparing, hoping, praying, waiting for a miracle. They were afflicted while other people were feasting. They suffered while others celebrated. And anticipation filled the air, but but agony and anguish filled these people's lives. They were sobbing as others sang, they they winced as others worshiped, and it was among people in that condition that we find Jesus during this feast. Not among the among the people who are partying, but the people who are suffering, and he doing that because he is the God of compassion.

Despite pain and suffering, as far as I can see the one true and only God, the God of the Bible, is a God of compassion. He sees suffering, he sees pain, and he goes to it. He meets needs, he fixes problems, he writes wrongs because this God, the God of the Bible is the God of compassion. This truth is on display in many of Jesus' miracles, and it's true with this miracle as well. Jesus' eyes lock unto one guy, a hopeless man. He's an invalid and he's been that way for 38 years. He's alone, he's desperate. All his hope is in some silly superstition that God would heal, but he'd only heal the first person that gets into this pool, and for 38 years, he's been too slow to be the first person in. And Jesus the compassionate God heals this man. It heals him immediately and completely. He heals him permanently. And his supernatural act of compassion and mercy did not depend on faith in the heart of the man. It depended on compassion in the heart of God.

This act also gives proof that Jesus is the Messiah because the Old Testament promised that when the Messiah came, the lame would be saved from their afflictions. And this act is proof that Jesus is God because he does something only God can do by healing this man. And if he is the Messiah, and if he is God, then all people everywhere must believe in him.

Well, our text today is going to show us two responses to this miraculous act of compassion, one from the man and the other from the religious leaders. And their responses are a lot like responses that people give today to God's acts of compassion throughout the world and in people's lives.

Let's look at the first response, the man's apathy starting in verse 9. Now, that day was the Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed." But he answered them, "The man who healed me, that man said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk.'" They asked him, "Who is the man who said you take up your bed and walk?" 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.

Those six words that start the paragraph, "Now, that day was the Sabbath," introduces tension into this account. This changes the tone of the passage entirely. Why? Because anyone who knows the rules of the Sabbath at the time and knows what Jesus told this man to do, they can already anticipate what's going to happen next. And it seems like John kind of sets us up for that. Why? Because he didn't tell us it was the Sabbath at the beginning. He tells it to us after this guy's been healed and after this guy's been told, "Hey, you go ahead and pick up your bed and walk." It's almost like a trap has been set, but it's not a trap for Jesus and it's not a trap for this man. It's actually a trap for the religious leaders.

Now, if you're not familiar with the Sabbath, it's the fourth of the 10 Commandments. Exodus Chapter 20, verses 8 to 11, Jews were told, remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, keep it special compared to the other six days of the week. The Sabbath starts at sundown on Friday and it goes until sundown on Saturday. So basically like Chick-fil-A, don't do your job one day out of seven. And this is no minor thing either. Exodus 31:14 says, "Everyone who profanes the Sabbath," meaning everyone who does their job on the Sabbath, "shall be put to death." Why? What's the big deal, work on the Sabbath? This was an eternal covenant that God had given the Jews. This was something they were to do throughout their generation as a sign of their relationship, their covenant relationship together. So you're going to go work on that day. What you are saying is middle finger to God, I'm going to do what I want to do and that's it. And God says, that kind of high-handed rebellion must be done away with.

But why did God create this day? What was God's intention behind the day? Exodus 31:15 says that it was to be a day when people rested. You rest. You don't do your job. You do other things, relax. In other words, it was supposed to be a blessing, but the religious leaders had made it a terrible burden. Why? Because, well, what is work really? Well, how did the Jews answer that question? They answered it by devising 39 different forms of work not to do on the Sabbath. So it stopped being don't do your job.

So if you carried something from one house to another, like this man carrying his bed from the pool to wherever he was going, if you did that, that was work and you're breaking the Sabbath. But if you carried that bed from one room in your house to another room in your house, that's not work, you're okay. There are dozens of these silly things that filled the Jewish person's day with burden after burden on a day that was supposed to be a blessing. Why did they do that? Well, they want to keep it holy and separate, safeguard it from all these things. But by Jesus' time, the blessing was completely gone. It was the worst day of the week. And that burden, whose fault is that? Well, it's God's. It's his fault. It's his law. He did all of this. Religious leaders stop being passionate about God, and they start being religious home monitors on that day, checking everything. And Jesus is like, "That's not the intention. That's not biblical. I'm coming after this."

This man wasn't breaking the Old Testament law in Exodus 20, but he was, by carrying his skinny bed mat from the pool to wherever he was going, he was violating a rule that they'd built around God's law and judging by the way to confront him, they held those rules in such high regard, they held him with just as much authority, in fact, as God's Old Testament law. So like religious fundamentalists today, there's no amazement at this miracle the man experienced. There's no compassion for this guy either. They should have been praising God, right? "Oh my goodness, you're walking. 38 years and now you're free." Nope. Their manmade rules blinded them to God's presence in their very midst in Jesus and blinded them to his gracious compassion for this afflicted, hopeless, now healed man. All of this I think is why Jesus chose to heal the man on that day. Think about that again.

Could have chosen any day, day before, day after, 10 days before. He could have done it any time, but he did it on the Sabbath, and I think he's doing that to poke the bear. He's poking them, he's coming after them. The word said in verse 10, shows that these leaders were going after this man repeatedly. They didn't just say this once. They were on him, they were after him. And it seems that he was scared because in verse 11, like my kids, he says, "Hey, it's not my fault. Now, I didn't do it." He knows the penalty for breaking the Sabbath, his death, so he blame shifts and it works because these guys don't care that he got healed. That wasn't important to them. Their only concern was that this man was breaking their Sabbath rule and that somebody said it was okay for him to do so, and that was unacceptable. That was the danger. Whoever this was, he is the real threat, so we have to know who is it that told you to do this? But verse 13, this man didn't know who it was.

I want you to think about that. This obviously shows that this man was healed even though he didn't believe in Jesus. Why do we know that? Because he didn't even know who Jesus was. Can't believe in a guy you don't even know. I want you to think about this too. Man received what he had been hoping for, complete permanent healing, been hoping for 38 years and he gets it, and when he gets it, he doesn't even know who gave it to him. God showed his compassion and he couldn't even acknowledge who it was, who did this for him. This is an interesting kind of apathy that's that's all too familiar in our day as well.

So to recognize this and even fight against it in our lives, that's point #1) ***acknowledge God in all your good, acknowledge God in all your good.*** Recognize that all the good in your life, it came from God, all of it. Not just some of it, all of it. There's not a single good thing you have ever had in your entire life that didn't come from the kind, gracious, compassionate heart of God. This is what James, Jesus' brother, writes. James 1:17 says, "Every good gift, every good gift, every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the father." Psalm 85:12 says, "The Lord will give what is good." But how many even acknowledge him for the good in their lives? I mean, the amount of trash that we take to the curb is a weekly testimony to the goodness of God in our lives, is it not? How many, like this man, don't even know who all of this good came from? How many receive an endless stream of good things and never or almost ever acknowledge God for it? Even that our eyes and ears work, that our hands and legs still talk to our brains, that that our brains still process information, that our lungs still take in air, all of that is good. Let alone where you were born and when you were born and and who you were born to and your job and your school and your friends and your family and your house and your life, all of that is good.

I know a hundred percent of it might not be the best and everyone has a different experience, but overall in general, you and I, we have it really good, don't we? But how many of us have made a concerted effort to acknowledge God behind all of that good? And maybe many of us who are Christians become apathetic about the things of God because we live like God isn't behind every good thing that we've ever had. Or God forbid, we just expect good things because he just given us so much good, so I just expect that steady stream of good to never run dry. But but we don't think that much about him actually giving us that good, every good thing that we've ever had.

I love watching people try to be neutral on Thanksgiving. You ever seen this? I remember watching the news and as they were coming to the end of their newscast, the newscaster said, "Oh, and it's Thanksgiving. And so everybody, be thankful. Goodnight." I was like, be thankful? What does that mean, be thankful? I can't be thankful unless I'm I'm thanking somebody, right? And just have the attitude of thankfulness, unless I say thank you. Well, in general, for all of the good things that you and I have ever had, that that someone we should be thankful to is God, but before we can even do that, we've got to first acknowledge that it was God behind all of the good that we have.

So acknowledge that all this good is only in your life in the first place because God gave it to you. He decided to be kind to you. He planned it for you and then he gave it to you. It would be a good exercise to sit down with a pad of paper and just start writing all the good things that you have in your life, just all of it. I mean, and just keep going and you're going to hit rough spots. Just keep going and keep going and keep going. And then when you're done with that piece of paper, look at it and go, every single one of these things came from God himself because he's a God of compassion, grace, and love. Let's be good at acknowledging God in all the good things in our lives.

Now, back to the text, this man's apathy continues. Verse 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.'"

Sometime later, we don't know how long Jesus finds this man in the temple. It makes sense that they're both in the temple because it's a Jewish holiday, and Jesus and him struck up a conversation. And it seems that Jesus ends this conversation with "Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you." So it sounds like maybe kind of Jesus might be implying that sin was what caused this guy's ailment in the first place, and this was the common view of the day that bad things happen to bad people. And so if you have a bad thing in your life, you must be a bad person. You can see this in Job's friends. We'll see this in John Chapter 9. I don't think Jesus believes that. So I don't think Jesus is teaching that here.

I haven't heard a guy say though that, "Well, if it's 38 years, it must have been when he was a young man. Maybe he did something wrong to his neighbor. And while he was getting away from his neighbor, he fell down and hurt himself and then he's crippled for his whole life." And I was like, wow, where is that? Okay, that's interesting. Must have a different Bible than I do. No, I want you to remember this man is healed without any faith in Jesus at all to heal him, none. Regardless of his lack of faith, he was truly and permanently healed. But just because he's physically healed, Jesus is saying here, I think, he was still in need of spiritual healing. Why? Because there's something worse that could happen if he didn't have that spiritual healing and that worst thing that Jesus says here, I think he's talking about God's divine judgment for all of his sin.

See, you often think people who suffer greatly in this life, that their suffering somehow makes them exempt from punishment for their sins, like they paid for their sin by their suffering in this life. But Jesus disagrees with that here. He calls this healed man, 38 years of suffering, still calls him to turn from his sin and trust in his words to escape the worst thing, which is God's wrath for all of his sin.

Now, let's see how he responds in verse 15. "The man went away and repented of all of his sins and gave his life to Jesus." You got that in your Bible? No? No. Man went away and told the Jews, which is John's shorthand for the religious leaders, told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. This is like a pre-Judas betrayal in this moment. And why does he do this? Probably wants to avoid the death penalty for breaking their Sabbath rule, yeah but even still, his loyalty, it seems, was to the Jews, to this religion, even to himself and not to the one who rescued him from 38 years of agony. I mean, he would rather be right with these Jewish leaders than be right with God. This is the damning control of false teaching. He will betray the one who healed him to be right with the leaders of his religion. This shows again that it was nothing on the outside of the man or the inside of the man that motivated Jesus to heal this guy.

This act of healing was a compassionate act of pure grace. Because it was that, it shows a second kind of apathy that's also common in our day as well. So to recognize this in our own hearts and to fight against it, point #2) ***appreciate God for all your good, appreciate God for all your good.*** Beyond acknowledging that all the good in your life is from God, the almost natural response to that acknowledgement is what? It's appreciation, it's gratitude, thanksgiving, even worship for the one who gave you all that good, who gave you all the blessing that you have in your life.

Gratitude, thanksgiving, even worship, all of which seems natural as a response to this man's healing, notice, is strikingly absent from this text.

John did not paint a pretty picture of this guy. It seems like he was healed on the outside, but there was no healing going on on the inside. And this isn't the first time that this would happen to Jesus either. This attitude towards Jesus' compassion, this apathy towards it repeats itself in Luke Chapter 17. You don't have to turn. I'm going to read it for you. In verse 11, the text says, "On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered a village, he was met by 10 lepers who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices saying, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.'" I mean that sounds like they got the right guy. He's master. "Have mercy on us. We trust you. You can heal us." When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourself to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet giving him thanks. Now, he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered, "Were not 10 cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found a return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" And he said to him, "Rise and go your way. Your faith has made you well." I could hear it in your groaning. You know that there was something not right about their response. Ten are healed. One guy shows appreciation. I mean all of them should have showed it, right? I mean, they're not lepers anymore. Their skin isn't falling off. They don't have to yell unclean to everyone they see. They don't have to be all by themselves and infecting everything and losing limbs. They don't have to do that anymore. They're freed from all that in an instant, and nine of them walk away.

You got to meditate on that for a second, but think about how many people are content and even pat themselves on the back for all the good in their lives that they accomplished rather than appreciating and even worshiping God for those good things. Maybe no one would freely admit it, but how many see the good in their lives as an expectation for the good people that they really are? How many see the good in their lives as a paycheck for all the good that they've done? I mean, how do nine lepers not thank Jesus for healing them unless maybe somewhere deep down they thought, maybe some some small way that they deserved what happened to them?

I mean, think about this man is showered with compassion, flooded with grace and mercy, and yet he's indifferent and even betrays the one that all of that good came through into his life. But yet know how many of us are flooded with grace and mercy? Not just in salvation, let's leave that off the table for a second. Just flooded with grace and mercy with all of the good things in our lives, but yet also live with a similar kind of indifference to all of the compassion and kindness and grace that we've been showed apart from salvation. And make no mistake, we are rich with God's good blessing in our lives, filthy, stinking rich. And when we tend to think rich people are people that have more money than we do, but compared to most people who have ever lived in the history of the world, we are all billionaires. Just being born here in the US makes us richer than most people who have ever lived. But add to that where we live and when we live, and I'm sorry, we're the lords and ladies, we're the kings and queens of yesteryear. And every single ounce of the vast quantities of good that fills all of our lives came from God, from his hand right

into our lives, which means, again, salvation aside, we can do away with any apathy in our lives by just knowing all the good that's in our lives is a gift from God. Then let's add to that the infinite good of this same God saving us, the good of not receiving his wrath for our sins, and we could really be the most appreciative, the least apathetic, the most grateful, most thankful people there are. And this'll all happen in your life and my life as we acknowledge God in all of the good and we appreciate him for all of the good in our lives, and none of us should ever respond to Jesus the way these antagonistic Jewish leaders did either.

Now, take a look at verse 16, "And this why the Jews, these Jewish leaders were persecuting Jesus because he was doing these things on the Sabbath." How dare you heal people on the Sabbath and tell them to pick up their bed and walk away? This text verse 16 starts the hostility towards Jesus in the book of John that is going to culminate and is going to build in anticipation until the cross. This is more than just a theological difference of opinion. Jesus is a threat to their entire religious system and their entire way of life, and this cannot be allowed to stand. He was guilty of violating their Sabbath rules by telling somebody else to violate their rules and that was punishable by stoning.

Verse 16, the word persecuting is not a one-time action. It is an ongoing program of opposition to Jesus. They are now enemies. He is a marked man, and their goal for him is not difficulty, it's not harm or suffering. They want him in the ground. And on Jesus part, verse 16, I love this, it says in verse 16, "Because he was doing these things on the Sabbath." Not he did it one time on the Sabbath, but he was doing this. This was an ongoing program of thumbing his nose into the face of their Sabbath rule. He was purposefully healing people on the Sabbath. In fact, you'll find Jesus doing this all along, Matthew, Mark and Luke, healing people on the Sabbath, violating their manmade Sabbath rules and getting other people to do the same thing. And notice verse 17, Jesus defends himself against their opposition. This is a defense that is going to last until verse 47. So let's see how how it starts. Verse 17, "But in contrast to their opposition, I'm going to defend myself this way. My father is working until now and I am working." In other words, if God's working on the Sabbath, I can, too. That's Jesus' argument. That's it right there. And I love this because this is what he doesn't say. Those are your manmade rules and they're not above the word of God, and I don't have to follow those because they're not God's word. Jesus makes that argument, but that's in Mark Chapter 7. Here, Jesus takes it up like a billion notches.

You see, the Jews admitted that God did work on the Sabbath. He had to. When it says that he rested in Genesis, that just means that he stopped creating things, but he continued to work in his creation. Why? Because if he didn't, this whole thing would fall apart. This would just dissolve and we'd we'd all be gone. The Jews knew this, but they had to come up with these silly ways to like, well, how does he get to work and we don't? So he came with all these silly ways to justify God not breaking his own law. All that Jesus did, he said in Mark 2:27, the Sabbath was made for man, made for human beings. So it wasn't made for God. Sabbath wasn't for God. And since it doesn't apply to God, Jesus says here, it doesn't apply to me either. Whatever reasons make it okay for God to work on the Sabbath, make it okay for Jesus to work on the Sabbath.

So Jesus' continual Sabbath breaking is not based on, well, it's not really in line what the Old Testament says. Those are manmade rules and blah blah, blah. No, that's not what he says. His Sabbath ignoring, ignoring their rules was consistent with who he saw himself to be, namely the one with authority over the Sabbath. And they don't like that at all. "You do not have authority over our Sabbath." And he refuses to conform to them. He refuses to submit. And again, this wasn't a one-time thing. He did this repeatedly, and this caused a crisis of authority. Why? Because by ignoring their Sabbath rules, Jesus is saying to them, "I have more authority than you guys. You can't do this to me. You can't put that on me. I'm above your authority." And in fact, by saying that, it is exactly what I just said, he's saying, "I am above your law. I'm above you guys. I have more authority than all of you." They don't like that at all so much, so he's got to die.

But for us, we can see the reality of our relationship to Jesus when he seeks to assert his authority over our lives just like he did with these men. So when there's antagonism to his authority, like there was with these religious leaders, it shows we need, to point #3) ***acquiesce to Jesus' unparalleled authority, acquiesce to Jesus' unparalleled authority.*** Aren't you glad I didn't have you write acquiesce? You're welcome.

Jesus is claiming authority over their most sacred law. He's claiming authority over all of them, and he did not back down. In fact, he says in Mark 2:28 that he is "the Lord even of the Sabbath." I'm the one in charge of the Sabbath. He, not them, had the authority to regulate the Sabbath and determine what it was and what it wasn't, what was legitimate to do, what wasn't legitimate to do on the Sabbath, and he said it was okay for this guy to pick up his little bed mat and walk away. And because he said it was okay for him to do that and their response to that is, "You must die."

This though, if we're honest, is a lot like the fury we see in our country towards God, towards his word and towards people who want to follow his word, right? I mean, people can put on a good face for church and put on a moral face as they go about their daily lives, but when God asserts his authority over their lives, when his word tells them to do something they don't want to do or forbids them from doing something they really want to do, that's when their true self, their true relationship with God comes out in their raging antagonism towards him. Now the text is clear that this is this is not how you and I want to be. We do not want to look at how the religious leaders respond to Jesus and go, "We should respond that way." Actually, every way they respond, we should do the opposite. So you don't want to be on the side of these religious leaders antagonistic to Jesus authority. No, you want to acquiesce, you want to submit to his authority.

So have you done that? Is that how you seek to live your life? Under his authority? I mean, there's a lot of talk about identity today. So in terms of your identity, do you see yourself, "Okay, he's the King, so I'm a subject. He's the Lord, that's who he is, so I'm a servant. He is the Master; I am the slave?" You do know that those words - servant, subject, slave - are used more in the Bible to describe Christians than the word Christian or disciple or saint. Why? Because that's

what we are. Is this what you confess when you sin, that you lived like the authority over your life when Jesus should have the authority over your life?

See, antagonism towards God shouldn't be seen in God's people. We should be people who acquiesce, who submit, who defer to Jesus' authority over our lives. Why? Because he has it, and one day, every person will recognize his authority. When? When they bow down to him and confess him as Lord. So don't fool yourself into thinking you and God are good, if giving in to his authority is not a major desire in your heart and something that often comes out of your life. That's not legalism, that's not religion. In fact, John 14:15 says that if you love me, you will defer to my authority and keep my commandments. It is an expression of love for Jesus when you prefer what he wants over what? Over what you want. That shows that you love him.

Now, why is his authority unparalleled? Well, look at verse 18. "This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him because not only was he breaking the Sabbath," we already talked about that, "but he was even had the audacity of calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God." And they not only want Jesus dead for continually breaking their Sabbath rules, but because he also continually called God his own father.

Now, we might read 17 and 18, go like, wait a minute, what's the big deal here? God's working and so is Jesus. What's the big deal? So God is his father. He's our father too, right? Aren't we supposed to pray Our Father? Aren't we his children? Isn't he our father? That's not what Jesus is saying. We might think that's what he's saying, but the Jews in the text help us understand that he's saying more than that, right? Why? Because they want to kill him even more now. Why? Because Sabbath breaking is a capital crime and so is blasphemy for being a man who is in the habit of claiming to be equal with God. Notice the text says, "Calling God his own father, making himself equal with God." Again, this is something Jesus did regularly.

Think about Jesus' argument again. If it's okay for God to work on the Sabbath, it's okay for me to work on the Sabbath. What's the hidden assumption in that argument? It's okay for God and it's okay for me because I am God. That's why it's okay. And he seals that truth by calling God his own father. Verse 17 is a full claim to deity and equality with God. That's what it is. The implications of his words are this, that he is God because he gets to live his life like God's privileges belong to him. By calling God his father, he's claiming to be God's son with all the rights and all the privileges of God belonging to him as well so that the way that God lives on the Sabbath, he can live on the Sabbath too.

So he's not just saying he's God's son, like all of us are God's children, God's offspring because he created us. That's Acts 17. No. Notice what he's saying. He says, God is his father within an argument where he's saying, "I have the right to heal and tell this man to pick up his little bed and walk. I have the right to do that because God is working and I get to do that too. I have that kind of relationship with God, a relationship none of you guys have." He is claiming to be the unique, one-of-a-kind son of God, one who is, as they recognize, equal with God.

So in their minds, this is a big deal. He is denying monotheism. That's a central core of the Jewish religion, but he's not really doing that. He's breaking the barrier between the Holy God

and sinful men, which he was because he is the God-man. Being God's son means that he is what God is. He has the same nature, the same rights and privileges because he has the same nature and he grounds his Sabbath-ignoring behavior not in, "Hey, you guys misread the Bible," but he grounds it in who he is, the son of God.

And think about this, if they came to this conclusion, "He's saying he's the son of God, we need to kill him," but Jesus really didn't mean for them to come to that conclusion. Wouldn't you expect Jesus to say something like, "Guys, wait a minute. You misunderstood what I was saying. God is your Father too. He is my father. We're all children of God. And so blah, blah." You notice Jesus didn't say that. And John too, you would expect if the Jews misunderstood him, that John maybe would've come along and said, "Hey, Jesus, he can say things that's hard to understand sometimes. And so let me just make it clear that he wasn't saying that he's equal with the father. You know that sounded like it, but no, no, no, really. We're all God's children." No, John doesn't do that either. Why? Well, because John and Jesus knew what Jews, Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses and a bunch of others refused to accept that Jesus is equal with God because he is God. He's the second person of the Trinity. And this was so unacceptable ignoring their Sabbath rules and claiming to be God, that verse 18 again, they were seeking, pursuing all the more to kill Jesus now. And I love this, Jesus didn't back down from this at all. This idea, God is my father, this is so offensive to them, it defended them so badly that they wanted to kill him. And you know what he does? He calls God his father or himself God's son nine more times in this chapter because he's poking the bear. "God's my father. Yeah, he is. Yeah, he is. Yeah, he is." And one more time, "He's my father." Why? Because offending people with truth is not sin, it's love.

So if we're not going to follow their antagonistic example, we must, point #4) ***accept Jesus' unacceptable deity, accept Jesus' unacceptable deity.*** It is as insane now as it was back then that Jesus of Nazareth, the teacher, the preacher, the Jewish peasant from 2000 years ago, is actually the God-man, that it sounds as crazy now as it did then. And I belabored this point because John continues to belabor this point in his text because he wants every single person to come to this conclusion like, wait a minute, he's actually God and I must either embrace that and accept that or not.

So can you say these words to yourself in the depths of your own soul, Jesus is God? Not Jesus is my God, that's great, but Jesus is God. Objectively outside of me, even if I never existed, he is God. He is Lord. Jesus is equal with God, using the words of verse 18. Can you say that? Jesus has the right to do what God does because he is God, using the logic of verse 17. Can you say that? Can you mean it when you say it? Jesus, not a good person or a good teacher or a prophet or some ascended master or a god. He is God. Can you say that?

And I want you to notice something. Unlike other passages in the New Testament that teach that Jesus is God, this one is different because when Jesus says these things, notice, it's Jesus saying these things, not Paul saying, well, Jesus is God, or Peter or Matthew or John or anybody else. No, it's not them. These are Jesus'. Or notice the last phrase of the text. Making what? Making

himself equal with God. Jesus is the one saying this. The implication of what he's saying and what John wants us to know and what these Jewish leaders are fighting against is that he is God. So either this is the most demonic deception or it is the most glorious truth. And if it's deception, he can't be God. Why? Because God cannot lie.

So if what he said here isn't true, he's either a deceiver or he's insane, which means that you can't call him a good teacher. You can't call him a prophet, right? Why? Because good teachers and prophets don't call themselves God. That's why. They might point to God, but they don't point to themselves as God. But Jesus does, and Jesus does because it's true. Jesus really is God. He is Lord. That's been the consistent message of true Christianity since the very beginning. It has always been our message because it was always Jesus' message. He made himself, in what he said, equal with God because he is God. He is Lord.

Have you accepted this unacceptable truth? If not, I want you to turn to one text, John Chapter 8. Jesus makes this absolutely imperative for every one of us to accept when he says in John 8:24, "I told you that you would die in your sins for unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins." That word he is not in the original text. The Greek literally says, "Unless you believe that I am," the name of God, "Unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins." So we're not talking about some obscure grad school level truth of Christianity. We are talking about step one. Can you say Jesus is God? Accept that unacceptable truth. Let's pray.

Jesus, you didn't make things easy for us when it comes to committing our lives to you, but what you did is you loved us by telling us the truth. This idea that you are God divides all humanity and it divides everyone within the sound of my voice. And so by your kind presence here today through the preaching of your word, I pray it more and more people would cross the line and embrace you for who you really are - the Lord, the God of the universe, and our king. That would be evidence of your kindness and your mercy, your compassion, your goodness. And so please do that for people. And for the rest, I pray that we would continue to live like these things are true for the glory of your name. Amen.