

**“Like Father, Like Son”**  
**Genesis 17: 1-14**

**First Presbyterian Church**  
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We looked last week at Jesus demonstrating his power and authority to heal. To bring life into lifeless and hopeless places. This week we are going to look at why he can do such things. We are going to look at the amazing claim, the amazing truth, that Jesus is Divine. That he can do the things he does because he is no mere man. He’s God in the flesh.

As we open up our passage, we see immediate conflict. Jesus had healed this man and he had done so on the Sabbath, which had made the Jewish leaders very angry. Here was Jesus breaking one of the most important laws in Judaism. But what drove them off the edge, in fact, what made them want to KILL Jesus was the fact that he was making himself equal with God. Jesus is saying to them through his actions and his words that he and the Father are one. That there is unity among them. That the same divinity that they have know of the father—the creator of the world, the sovereign king of the universe, the Holy God who alone is to be worshiped, the one who brought them out of slavery in Egypt and gave them the land that they live in, the one who delivered them from bondage in Babylon, the one who had called them to be his unique people of blessing in the world... this is who Jesus is claiming to be. Jesus is claiming that there is total unity between Israel’s God and himself. And they go crazy.

Now, let’s give the Jewish leaders here a little break. If we put ourselves in their shoes, I’m not sure if we would act much differently. If I got up and began preaching to you that I not only was called by God to minister to you, but that God was my father and that he and I were equal, in fact that he and I were united completely and that I was fully divine, you would rightfully call the Presbytery and have me defrocked. (Hopefully you wouldn’t want to kill me!) There is some rightful objection here.

Let me just pause for a minute to say this: we are supposed to be taken aback by this. Jesus is saying some mind-blowing things here. The point is to have your mind blown. As you listen to what He says, let it expand your idea of who he is. The purpose is that you see him as more amazing, more infinite,

more able, more powerful, more majestic, more wonderful that you did before. So let's look more closely at what he says...

It is sometimes a little difficult to follow Jesus' line of reasoning in John because it's not linear like we are used to. He weaves in and out like he's creating a beautiful tapestry and, as a whole, it's gorgeous, but it can be difficult to follow at times. But I think there are 3 major points he's making here. He's telling his audience there and he's telling us that he and the Father are One. And they are one in mission, in life, and in authority.

Let's look at that first one: mission. What Jesus comes out of the gate with is the thing that ends up really inciting the most anger from the Jewish leaders. They are angry that he's told someone to carry a bed on the Sabbath (totally disregarding, by the way, the amazing HEALING that Jesus just did). And as they are persecuting Jesus, he answers them. And the Greek word used here is unique. It's a legal word. It means that he's giving a defense. And his defense is this: My Father is working until now and I am working.

Now, what does he mean by that? Well, there are 2 major things going on. Jesus is making a statement about the Sabbath and he's making a statement about himself. There had been a good bit of debate on the subject of God's work, and especially his work on the Sabbath. The question was basically, "does God work on the Sabbath? Is he actively involved in what happens in the universe or does he check out for a while? If he is involved, does that make him a Sabbath-breaker?" This was a question that was debated among rabbis. And the consensus was that Yes, God is always at work and no, he's not breaking the Sabbath. The reason was that the whole universe was his! And his mission was continually moving forward and the entire universe was the domain of that mission, so God is continually at work and not guilty of Sabbath-breaking.

Now, this may sound like an odd argument, but the idea that God is continually at work is not a universally accepted one. One of the main tenants of Deism is that God set the world in motion; like a watch maker he created it and wound it up, but that he left the building after that. That he is not really involved personally or daily. He doesn't really have a mission, it's just wind it up and let's see where it goes. And some very influential people in this country were Deists. People like Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Adam Smith, and John Locke. Jefferson, especially had created a Bible for himself in which he had cut and pasted the parts he wanted. What

was left out was all of Jesus' miracles and anything pointing to supernatural intervention, most importantly anything indicating Jesus' Divinity. That may be your belief system this morning. That some sort of greater power started the world but after that it's simply naturally working itself out. And, if that's your belief, then you are going to find Jesus' words very challenging here. And I hope comforting too.

Because what Jesus is saying here is that God is always on mission. He's always at work. He's always working in this world and doing so in order to bring things to a good end; the redemption of the world and the renewal of all things. And guess what... Jesus is always working too. He has the same mission. He and the father are one in mission. They are one in work.

We need to pause for a minute and remember that Jesus hasn't checked out. He hasn't left us to our own devices. Even when it feels like he's not present with us, what we need to know is that he is. He is continually working. He is committed to his mission to redeem and renew. And he's at work in us.

The second point here is that of life. Jesus and the father are one in mission and they are one in life. Look at verse 21... "For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will." And verse 25... "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." And then verse 26... "for as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself."

Jesus is saying that God the Father is the author of life. He has the ability to give life and even to raise to new life. He's the creator of everything. The one who spoke creation into being. Again, this is one of the fundamental beliefs of the Jewish people—God's creative and life-giving power. Jesus is building on what they already believe. God's always working... ok, we got that... God has the power to create and renew life... ok, we got that too. And then Jesus brings the hammer down. That same power to give life...it is mine as well. That same nature to bring life into dead places... that is my nature as well. The same life-giving essence that defines the Father... that's my essence as well.

And what is unique here that Jesus is saying is that the ability to give life generates from himself. The son has life in himself Jesus says. This is really different that what we see all throughout scripture. Moses had the ability to

do pretty amazing things. He threw his staff on the ground and it became a snake. He stretched that staff over the waters of the Red Sea and they parted. Prophets throughout the Old Testament had the power to speak of future things like they had already happened. And the prophet Elijah raised a boy from the dead, as did Elisha, his predecessor. And at the end of Elisha's life, after he had died and been buried, another man who was dead was accidentally thrown into Elisha's grave and, when he touched Elisha's bones, he came back to life! So we've seen life giving already in the Bible. In all of those instances, it is God's life-giving power working through his chosen servants to create life. None of it generates from them. It generates from the Father. But what Jesus is saying is unique. He is saying that he has life that generates from him. Because he and the Father are one in life. Because he is God, he has the power to bring life into dead places. The generator and the giver are one in the same.

Now, let's pause again. Jesus has said that he and the Father are one in mission. That he's continually at work. And that should affect us. And now he's saying that he and the Father are one in life. That he has the ability to bring life into dead places. That should affect us too. As we saw last week, Jesus can come to the places in our lives we believe the most dead, the most lifeless, the most hopeless. And he can bring life. Because that's his nature. It's to bring life to dead places.

Mission and Life. Two of the places of unity that Jesus talks about here. The third is going to be a little tougher for us. What Jesus says is that he and the Father are one in mission, in life and in authority. Specifically here in the authority to judge.

Look at verses 22 and 23... "the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, 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." Then the end of this passage, verse 27 and following... "And he has given him authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment"

Those first two categories were based on things that everyone already knew were true about God—he never stops working and he has the power to give life. And this third one follows suit. If God has the power to give life, then

he alone has the power to judge—to condemn. And Jesus is saying here that this very power; the power to judge between life and death, has been given to him. The Father and the son are one in that authority.

Now, of course, this would have been offensive to the Jewish leaders of the time. They knew and believed that there was an overarching standard and that they were going to be held to it. They believed in God's holiness and in his authority to judge. But for them, the fact that Jesus was claiming the same thing was utterly offensive. That's a claim only God can make.

For us, it's a little different. Because our culture and our generation actually objects to all of it. We object to the entire idea of judgment. The concept is offensive to us. The idea that someone else can say that what I'm doing is wrong is just completely offensive. It's one of the main tenants of Postmodernism—moral relativism, and even relativistic epistemology. You have your truth and I have mine. No standard. What's right and wrong for you... well that's different than what's right and wrong for me. And guess who gets to decide—me!

We don't even like the idea of black and white at all. We live in the gray. Look at the movies we put out. Our superhero movies especially. The most popular ones are the ones that live in that gray area. Batman as the Dark Knight... pretty good but he's got some secrets. And the Marvel's movies are perfect examples. The Avengers and the Guardians of the Galaxy. Great movies—some of the best in the last few years. But they live in the gray. In the Avengers, the heroes are all broken to some extent, all some sort of good and bad. The one exception is Captain America and he gets made fun of for being so black and white. And then Guardians of the Galaxy—the heroes are all criminals! At the end of the movie Starlord asks what should we do... something good... something bad... how about a little good and a little bad? Because ultimate standards, judgment, that kind of authority is offensive to us and we don't want to deal with it. Which makes what Jesus says here sting. Because he's telling us that there's a standard. A standard that if we are honest with ourselves, we know we don't meet.

So what do we do? Well, I think the call to action here is clear. Listen and respond. Jesus is saying that he is calling out. His voice -the voice that is one with the father in mission and life and authority - that voice is ringing out. And the dead will hear it. It's so powerful that dead ears will hear and it will bring them life.

So will we listen? Will you listen to the One who cries out that he is continually at work on your behalf? Will you listen and respond in faith? Will you listen to the one who has the power to bring life to the deadest, dullest, most lifeless places in your life? Will you listen to the one with the ultimate authority to judge between life and death? To execute judgment as a just and righteous judge against all sin—yours and mine. Will you listen and repent and cling to him alone for salvation?

Will you listen to the voice of One who has taken on himself that very judgment on your behalf? The One who has cried out, “my God why have you forsaken me?” The one who, though he was ONE with the father was torn from him in order that we might be united to him.

It’s this voice that is calling us to follow him as savior and lord today. Will you listen?