

Last Judgment
November 7, 2021
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church
John 5:19-24
Jesus Will Judge You

John 5:19–24 (NIV84)

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.

Dear Friends in Christ,

What does it show when a young child tells mom or dad, “You can’t tell me what to do”? What does it show when a student tells their teacher, “You can’t tell me what to do”? What about when an employee tells their supervisor, “You can’t tell me how to do my job”? Or when a citizen tells a government official, “You can’t tell me what to do”? Of course, we must obey God rather than man if any authority commands us to go against God’s Word. Putting those cases aside, when someone refuses to acknowledge the authority of a parent, teacher, supervisor or government official, it comes down to a matter of honor and belief. The person is certainly not giving honor to the one in authority. In addition the person is showing that they do not believe the person in authority is telling them the correct thing to do.

All of us here today would agree that Jesus has more authority than parents, teachers, presidents or kings. We should give Jesus honor and believe everything he says. Not only does Jesus have all authority but he will also be the Judge of all people on the Last Day. Jesus will judge you. Therefore honor him and believe him now.

Honor Jesus

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.

This is a strong and direct answer to “them.” Who is the “them” Jesus answers in this way? John simply refers to the group as the Jews. You see, Jesus has just healed a man who had been invalid for 38 years. The man stood up and carried his mat for the first time in 38 years! But the Jews questioned him with disapproval because he was carrying his mat on the Sabbath day. How dare you work on the Sabbath was the implication of their question. When the man discovered that Jesus was the one who healed him

he told the Jews and the Jews went to question Jesus. John describes it this way, “the Jews persecuted Jesus” (John 5:16). Now, when John talks about the Jews, he does not mean every Jewish person. Instead he is referring to the leaders, the Sadducees, Pharisees, teachers of the law, chief priests and so on.

When Jesus tells them that he is the Son of God and that God is his Father, the Jewish leaders try even harder to kill him. They gave no honor to Jesus, the Son of God. This is why Jesus responds with a strong answer. *“He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.”* They would not honor the Son and therefore were not honoring the Father and therefore would be judged to be unworthy of eternal life at the Last Judgment.

But, you say, we are not the Jewish leaders. We honor Jesus. We believe Jesus is the Son of God. True, and thank the Lord for the faith he has given to us. However, I want to address some misconceptions about Jesus that can still affect believers.

Some see God the Father and God the Son as if they are part of a good cop, bad cop routine. A suspect is in the interrogation room. One officer or detective is yelling at them, pounding the table, threatening the suspect with a million years in prison. The other one comes in as a friend, just there to help, hoping the suspect responds to one of the tactics and confesses. I don’t know if it works in real life but it seems to in the movies and television. Some people, maybe us at times, see God the Father as the bad cop.

The Father gave the commandments. The Father demands perfect obedience. The Father is the angry God of the Old Testament who is going to send people to more than a million years in the gloomy dungeon of hell. But Jesus, God’s Son, is the good cop. He just came to help. He is on your side. He understands why you couldn’t keep all of the Father’s strict commandments. Everyone makes mistakes. Certainly Jesus isn’t going to go along with his Father’s strict rules and punish anyone for all of eternity for sinning. Sure, we think, Jesus will judge me but not like the Father would.

I knew someone who had a buddy who was a judge. This person carried around the judge’s business card and it was his get out of a speeding ticket card. His judge buddy put his mobile number on the card and the officer who stopped the speeder was to call the number and talk to the judge so this speeder didn’t get a ticket. Sometimes we might think Jesus is a judge like that. Jesus is my buddy. He would never condemn me for my sins. We see Jesus as the golfing buddy or the drinking buddy. He’ll just overlook my sins. Jesus is like my best friend who listens to all my gossip. He’s the friend that laughs at my jokes, even the off color ones, maybe even overlooking the dirty ones or the borderline racist ones. Surely my friend Jesus, my good buddy Jesus won’t throw the book at me on Judgment Day.

If you had a friend who was a judge in our courts, would you say something like this if you were the defendant in their courtroom? “Hey buddy! Can’t you just dismiss my case?” A just judge, even your best buddy, would likely say something like, “You will address me as your honor in this courtroom.”

We must not take our sin lightly and treat Jesus with such dishonor to think he is going to judge differently than his Father on Judgment Day. *“Whatever the Father does the Son also does.”* Jesus and his Father are one, perfectly united as members of the Triune God along with the Holy Spirit. There is no disagreement, no power struggle among Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Therefore we do not treat Jesus like a buddy we watch the games with or go shopping with. He is the almighty Son of God and we give him honor because he will judge each one of us on the Last Day.

The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.

Believe Jesus

We honor Jesus because he will judge us and has the authority to condemn us to eternal death. We take our sin seriously and repent. And then we rejoice to believe the message from the One who judges us. Jesus says:

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.

The Judge has announced his verdict before the Last Day. We don't have to wait until Judgment Day to find out if we will live or die eternally. Believe what Jesus says here. And for all who believe in Christ and the Father who sent him, there is the certain promise of a not guilty verdict. Through faith in Christ you will not hear a word of condemnation on that day. Instead you will be sentenced to live forever in heaven. Eternal life is yours.

Believe it because the One who promises this is the Judge who will proclaim this when all people stand before him on the Last Day. Believe it because the Judge is the One who knows it to be true. Jesus will not call witnesses on that day to testify for and against you. He will not pull up a recording of all your acts and weigh them to see if you deserve eternal life. He will not ask you to produce evidence that you honored him in your life on earth. Jesus, the Judge of all, knows all. He especially knows what he has done. He does not need to ask anyone for evidence that your sins were paid in full. Jesus did that himself. He suffered. He died. He endured the sentence of hell as his Father abandoned him to the cross. Jesus knows that every sin is paid because he did it. Believe Jesus when he tells you that you are not and will not be condemned.

Believe him when he tells you that you have crossed over from life to death. He is the one who knows. Jesus is the one who died and then rose from the dead on the third day. He crossed from death to life. Believe him when he says that you have crossed from being dead in sin to being alive with Christ. Believe him when he promises that you will cross from physical death to physical and eternal life.

The fact that Jesus will judge us has an impact on our daily lives. We put aside the foolish idea that Jesus will just laugh off our sins or give us a break when he judges on the Last Day. We live each day honoring Jesus, just as we honor the Father and Spirit as one God, now and forever. Sin is not taken lightly but we repent as soon as we recognize our sin. As we honor Jesus because he will judge us, we also give him the greatest honor by believing what he says. To our sinful nature, Jesus as judge terrifies us because Jesus knows everything about us. To our new self, Jesus as judge is good news because Jesus loves us, forgives us and promises eternal life to all who believe. Therefore we honor and believe our Judge.

Amen.