

“I and the Father are One”
Pastor John Bronson

January 8, 2012

John 5:18-29

Order of worship for January 8th, Communion and Dedication of Church Officers

Prelude

Pre-service Song (8:55 am)
Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship: Isaiah 55:6-11 and Prayer

Dedication of Church Officers: Romans 12:1-2 and 2 Timothy 2:15

Hymn of Dedication: “Make Me a Servant” Song # 669

Offering and Offertory

Hymn to prepare the Heart: “Jesus, Name Above All Names” Song # 86

Message: “I and the Father are One” (John 5:18-29)
By Pastor Bronson

The Lord’s Supper

Song of adoration: “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us” Overhead
Invitation to the Supper and Prayer of Confession
Dedication and Distribution of the Elements

Songs of Worship:

“Power of the Cross” Overhead
“Jesus Saves” Overhead
“God Be With You” Song # 232

Parting Word of Grace

Sunday Evening in the Word

Psalms of Ascent: 120

5:30 pm to 7:00 pm

Prayer Closet

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”
(Colossians 4:2a)

This week let us be united in praying that:

1. **Steve and Carol Lyons in Tanzania:** Steve will have discernment in dealing with the men in training; the young men will gain a new understanding of Jesus and a burden for others; that all will be salt and light in their communities
2. **President Obama:** the Lord will become first in his life; the Spirit will open his mind to a true understanding of the Bible; the Father will confirm in him his adoption into the family of God through Jesus
3. **The Elders:** they will be united in prayer for the Lord’s direction to discern God’s purpose and to lead the church in accomplishing it
4. **Military or Public Service Personnel of the Week Chance Morgan** (son of Larry & Patti Ott): that he do well in his training; that he find strong Christian fellowship
5. **Young Adult of the Week Danielle Sands** (daughter of Stephanie Sands): that her studies go well and she be a light on campus for the Lord.

The emphasis for this morning is the Lord's Supper. Even as I give comments now, let your minds be turned in that direction. When giving directions to the disciples Jesus said this, He said, "...do this in remembrance of Me." Thinking about that, I think that we tend – my experience and often times my instruction, tends to emphasize not only negative thoughts, but self-reflective [thoughts], in other words [such thoughts as] “where am I?” “How do I stand?” I understand how that goes because when you come to the Communion Table you ought not to be in a contentious, divisive relationship with anybody in the body of Christ. But the basic instruction which Jesus says is, “Remember Me.” So I think we should ask ourselves, is that what we do? Do we ever do that as we anticipate taking communion together?

The portion of God's word that we are coming to today discusses the topic, which is “The Father and I are One”, is John 5:18-29. I encourage you to open to this passage. I am going to read it and then I have a very definitely shortened message today because we are going to be celebrating communion together and I want to be sure we have adequate time for that. The healing, if you recall in John's Gospel, that we looked at in the beginning of chapter five is the healing of the man who was lame beside the Pool of Bethesda. The response that comes at Jesus as a result of this and other of His miracles is intense hostility. You and I need to understand why that hostility there; what happened to bring that hostility to the fore in the minds of the Jews. Primarily it is the Pharisees who are responding and interacting with Jesus and to those whom He healed. One of the commentators said that when we come to this discourse, beginning in verse 19 and continuing to the end of chapter 5, in this section we actually are exposed to the heart of the gospel. Now I suspect that most of us think that the heart of the gospel is the death of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection. That is understandable. But the heart of the gospel is actually the fact that God loves us so much that He was willing to take our condition upon Himself, which then allowed Him to die for our sin. The gospel begins with the incarnation of the Son of God. The reason that incarnation is so significant is because Jesus is God.

What I have just said would cause every Muslim in the world to froth with anger. It would also offend every Jew. It is also the doctrine, the truth that is gradually disappearing from those who call themselves Christians. It is important that we understand this. This is what one commentator said about this passage: “Nowhere else in the Gospels do we find our Lord making such a formal, systematic, orderly, regular statement of His own unity with the Father, His divine commission and authority, and the proofs of His Messiahship, as we find in this discourse.” (Leon Morris, “The Gospel According to John”, p. 311, citing J.C. Ryle). It is going to take us a little while to move through all of these verses for I do not want to short change what they have to say. Follow with me now as I read the passage:

(18) “This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.” Now we hear Jesus' response to the Jews. *(19) “So Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly,, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing, for whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. (20) For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. (21) For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. (22) The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, (23) 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. (24) Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. (25) Truly, truly, I say to you, 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. (26) For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. (27) And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. (28) Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice (29) and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.”*

What I have attempted to do is to organize my comments as six responses; these are the responses that Jesus has to the angry, rejecting hostility of the Jews to Him and to what He has done. Here is the first response. The first response is really a confession. He is saying, you know I am entirely dependent on the Father. I am entirely [dependent]. He says in verse 19, “*The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing.*” Those words, that statement would have been conciliatory; it would have been [such that] the Jews would have received it well. For it was a cardinal point in their understanding, at the core of their understanding, that all creatures, all created beings are utterly and totally dependent on the Living God. That is what they would hear. They would hear Jesus say, “I like you, I am entirely dependent upon God.” That would be soothing to them. It also reminds us of Jesus’ constant purpose. There are always two levels of purpose in the Gospel of John. The one level of purpose that John the gospel writer has is that we will see Jesus as the Messiah. But Jesus has a purpose, and that purpose that Jesus has is that we will see God as the God of grace and truth. We always want to be looking for that, and this statement would help that purpose, to see that God is the God of grace and truth. For [what] Jesus is saying is, all I am doing is I am displaying the Father to you. That point is made most beautifully in Hebrews 1:3. That is a great verse to memorize, to have down pat. This is what it says: “*He [Jesus] is the radiance of His glory and the exact imprint of His nature.*” So literally, as He at one time said to His own disciple Philip when Philip says, “Jesus, show us the Father...” Jesus says to him, you have been looking at me for a long time. “*He who has seen me has seen the Father.*” You and I should take great comfort and encouragement in that statement. We realize that the revelation we have in the word here, which displays Jesus to us, is designed to introduce us to and help us know God the Father. That would be good news for the Jews [as well].

But I think we need to go a step further in terms of application to ourselves in recognizing that Jesus is making this statement to those men: He is saying, “Listen, you can trust me because I am submissive. I am in total submission to the Father.” I think you and I need to think about that. Jesus is not presenting Himself as a brilliant innovator. The deeds He does and the truth and wisdom that He preaches are not the fruit of a great and independent mind. They are instead clear and humble and exact replications of what Jesus has seen and learned from the Father. How different that is from the world’s estimate of greatness. That is question #2, “If Jesus were alive today do you think that He would be celebrated as a great man? What do people tend to believe makes a person great, exceptional or otherwise noteworthy?” I think that culturally we are oriented to the assertive, the aggressive. We like to see people who are self-confident, able to step out, make themselves known, establish their territory, take the lead. That is what we like; that is what our culture talks about. If someone were to introduce him or herself to a group of people and say, my chief characteristic is that I am a submissive, humble person, we would pass right over that one and say we need a leader first.

A myth has grown up, and that myth is America’s business-consumer culture exists in comfortable harmony with Christianity. That myth is sucking the life out of the church.

Jesus’ words here are a tacit invitation, of course, to examine as closely as possible the works that He does, for they are in fact the works of the Father. Think what we know already. What have we seen Jesus doing? Does Jesus heal a government official’s dying son? He does. Therefore God the Father heals the sons of government officials. Was the government official a believer? Not when Jesus first acted. Did Jesus heal a pathetic lame man who had been lying beside the Pool of Bethesda for thirty eight years? Yes He does! You know what I would have thought about that guy? “Looser! If you have been lying around there for thirty eight years, it serves you right!” But what does God the do to that person? He heals him. So God the Father heals losers. I won’t finish the list of brilliant observations I have here, but go back to the beginning of the Gospel of John and say to yourself, in every instance, Ah, that is what God the Father does. Do I agree [with it]?

This is what Jesus says in John 10:37-38. This is what He does to get around the argumentative objections of the Pharisees, to get around them as they were attacking Him “ad hominem”, attacking the man; he says, look at my works. This is what He says, “If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe them, but if I am doing them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.”

At this point if you look at the questions on the sheet [at the end of the text], an additional question arises. Jesus wants people to see the Father in Him. He doesn't necessarily want people to see Him. I ask this question; it is an honest question with which we struggle. Do you think people ever struggle with the tension of wanting others to see Jesus in their life, or wanting others to see them as great in Jesus? Where this bites – in this kind of congregation, all joking aside, we tend to be humble people, that is who we are: I know that is true of us – but here is the additional question #2: “Do you think that sometimes our reluctance to stand up or stand out for Jesus or the faith is really the fear that others will see us rather than seeing Jesus?” Notice how that turns it right around the other way. “I don't want to witness for Jesus because I am embarrassed about myself and people will notice me and they will see all my flaws, and I won't say anything correctly, and so I am just going to step back and I am not going to misrepresent God. That sounds very humble. It is also faithless.

Let me come back to that in just a moment. The works which Jesus does are important for Jesus as His testimony for God as the God of grace and truth. But they are important for John, as I said before, in bringing attention to Jesus Himself as the Anointed One of God. There are two ways in which Jesus is exemplifying His obedience to the Father. The first is passive. This where we have been: I am nothing but what the Father is; I do nothing but what the Father does; I say nothing but what the Father says. That is passive, a passive kind of obedience. This, of course, demonstrates His complete dependence on the Father. It is the embodiment of His submission. So the tacit comment is that if you don't like something about Jesus, guess what: you don't like that about God. That is the connection that would be made at that particular point. But there is another point, and that is His active obedience. Recognize that in these words Jesus is saying, “I do what only God can do.” “I only do what I see God doing; but what I do only God does.” That is why this is a profound statement of the divinity of Christ. “I do god-things.”

There is an application here. This emphasizes the unity of the Father and the Son. You and I need to recognize that you and I are also asked to engage in passive as well as active obedience. We should desire greatly that others would encounter God in us, and then be prepared. How many remember the name of Tebow? You know that I am not a sports fan. That is not what I do. I found Steve [Ross's message of last week] hilarious. I think God has an immense sense of humor in the fact that this slim, light, agile man has to teach gymnastics is just cool; I think that is great, instead of growling at people on the football line. I also find it very funny that I who never do any sports whatsoever can sit there and understand what he has to say!

Have you noticed the response of the world to Mr. Tebow? One of the articles said he is the most disruptive NFL players ever. That is a quote. Now think about the guys that have been involved in drugs, in sex, and out-right criminality. But they are not disruptive. And they are right! Mr. Tebow in his quiet, humble and his consistent testimony, of his submissive belief and trust in God drives the Pharisees wild, because what they see is a man who loves God. You and I at some point or another should be driving our neighbors wild, because they encounter God through our faith.

Pray with me please: gracious Father in heaven as we prepare to take together the Supper we would ask that the Spirit would bring with utter clarity to our hearts and minds the remarkable life our Lord Jesus Christ, not just the cross, as central and defining as that is, but Father the whole life that He lived, that we might live that same kind of life. All this for the good of our neighbor and the glory of the God Who loves us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Slide Notes and Discussion Questions:

Slide #1, John 5:18-29 is the very heart of the Gospel

Additional Question: In preparing for the Lord's Supper do you tend to concentrate more on thinking about yourself, especially your failings, or more on remembering Jesus, what He did, what He said, who He is?

Question 1: The message looks at the hostility of the Jews toward Jesus. In your experience what seems to be the most common or perhaps the most intense reason people reject Jesus?

Slide #2, First Response of the Six (v. 19)

I am totally dependent on the Father (see Hebrews 1:3)

I am trustworthy because I am submissive

I only do what the Father does (see John 10:37-38)

Question 2: If He were alive today, do you think Jesus would be celebrated as a “great man”? What do people tend to believe makes a person “great”, exceptional or otherwise noteworthy?

Additional Question: Do you think people ever struggle with a tension between wanting others to see Jesus in their life or wanting others to see them as great in Jesus?

Additional Question: Do you think that sometimes our reluctance to stand up or “stand out” for Jesus or “the faith” is really a fear that others will just see us rather than seeing Jesus (or the truth)?

Slide # 3, Jesus as passive [in obedience]: I am wholly dependent and I only copy [the Father]

I am perfect in submission [and therefore I am trustworthy]

Jesus as active [in obedience]: I do what only God can do

This is the unity of the Father and the Son

Question 3: How do you tend to compare God the Father and God the Son, as similar, identical, significantly different from each other, or do think of them separately at all?

Additional Question: Would you say that your parents raised you to become their equals? Are raising your own children with that purpose in mind?