The Son Gives Eternal Life

John 5:16-47

Key Verse: 5:24 “Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.”

Have you been watching the Winter Olympic games, which are being held in Pyeong Chang in South Korea? More than 3,000 athletes who came from 92 countries compete with each other to win. Chloe Kim, a 17 year old Korean-American girl from California, won a gold medal in snowboard half pipe last week, and she became a national hero. Right after the Winter Olympic games, the Paralympics will follow. Many disable athletes around the world also compete. They are more inspired and heart-moving because they overcome their physical limitations and demonstrate the unlimited possibility of human willpower. Their slogan is “We can do, too.” But the man in John 5, who had been an invalid for 38 years, didn’t do anything but complain. He had lost even his desire to be healed. Jesus visited this invalid man and asked, “*Do you want to get well*?” Jesus planted the seed of desire for healing in his heart. Then Jesus commanded him, “*Get up! Pick up your mat and walk*.” When the man heard the voice of Jesus, suddenly power began to circulate in his body and soul. The man got up, picked up his mat, and walked. A miracle happened! The man who had been paralyzed for 38 years got up and walked when he heard the words of Jesus. The word of Jesus has power to change, to heal, and to save.

In today’s passage Jesus defends himself and his ministry from the accusations of the Jewish leaders. They accused Jesus of being a law-breaker because Jesus had healed the invalid man on the Sabbath. In the fourth Commandment, God told Moses and his people to keep the Sabbath holy. So the Jews didn’t work on the Sabbath in order to keep this Sabbath law. These days Orthodox Jews do not turn on the light switch or flush the toilet on the Sabbath because they consider these to be acts of work on the Sabbath. The Jewish leaders thought that Jesus violated the Sabbath law by healing him on the Sabbath.

How did Jesus defend himself? Look at verse 17. “***In his defense Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working***.” Jesus said that he worked because God the Father was always working. What are God’s works which Jesus mentions here? They are the work of creation, the work of restoration, and the work of salvation. There is no Sabbath for God’s work. The Sabbath law was made for men, not for God. God’s work continues even on the Sabbath, just as babies are born even on Sunday. No pregnant woman is restricted from giving birth on Saturday or Sunday in order to keep the Sabbath law. Jesus healed the invalid man because the man needed to be healed at that time.

According to verse 18 the Jewish leaders tried to kill Jesus all the more because they thought not only that Jesus broke the Sabbath, but even that he called God his own Father, making himself equal with God. Now they accused Jesus of blasphemy. They accused whoever dishonored God or defiled His name. They did not recognize that Jesus is the Son of God who was sent from God the Father.

Jesus answered them by explaining his relationship with God the Father and the authority which were given to him. Look at verses 19, 20. “***Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, 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. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed.***” In these words we see the picture of a beautiful love and trust relationship between the Father and the Son. Jesus compared himself to an obedient and dependant son who needs his father’s help. A son does not know how to ride a bike. His father teaches his son how to wear a helmet, how to grab the handles, how to put his feet on the pedals, how to ride, and how to stop. Once the son begins to ride by himself, the father follows behind him to protect his son from any possible accident or injury. I believe that all fathers have the same experience when we teach our children to drive a car. Love and trust! Obedience from humility! These are blessings from God to those who understand the relationship between God the Father and God the Son.

Jesus said in verse 20, “***Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed.***” God the Father gave authority to the Son. What authority did God the Father give to the Son? First, God gave the Son Jesus the authority to give life to men. In verse 21 Jesus said, “***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***.” Giving life and taking it away belong to God. Only God has authority over men’s destiny. God the Father shared this authority with the Son Jesus. Jesus gave life to whom he was pleased to give it to. In chapter 4 Jesus gave life to the dying son of the royal official. Jesus gave the living water welling up to eternal life to a Samaritan woman. Jesus raised the invalid man who had been like a dead man for 38 years. Whoever came to Jesus received new life and eternal life. Look at verse 26. “***For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself***.”

Second, God gave the Son the authority to judge. Look at verses 22-23, 27. “***Moreover, the Father judges no one, but entrusted 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….And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.”*** No one has authority to judge others, but God alone. This is because God alone, who created the world, deserves to judge his creatures. God has authority to judge the living and the dead because he gave life to them. God the Father enabled the Son to judge so that people might honor the Son as they honor the Father.

In verses 24-30 Jesus illustrated how he gives life and judges the world. Look at verse 24. “***Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life***.” In this verse Jesus taught the way to having eternal life; first, to hear Jesus’ word; second, to believe God who sent Jesus. Some people believe that they have eternal life after they die. This is partially true. In this verse Jesus uses the present tense ‘has’, not a future tense ‘will have.’ He meant that our salvation occurs in the present. We have eternal life (at present) the moment we believe in Jesus. Paul said in Romans 10:9,10, “*If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.*” This is the reason we encourage new believers to make confessions of faith through acceptance prayer. For example, when the Samaritan woman heard the word of Jesus, the Holy Spirit worked in her soul that she could drink the living water welling up to eternal life. She experienced the joy of salvation and the hope of eternal life the moment she heard the word of Jesus. She crossed over from death to life.

When we share the gospel with unbelievers, we must believe God’s immediate work of salvation for those who accept Christ as their Lord and Savior. God does not delay in saving one lost soul. He is always at work for salvation 24/7. So it is important for us to bring them to listen to Jesus’ words and make them confess. Look at verse 25. “***Very truly I tell you, 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.***” Lazarus was in the tomb for a few days. When Jesus arrived at his tomb, bad smells were emitting from his rotten body. But Jesus called Lazarus by calling his name, ‘*Lazarus, come out!*” At his command, Lazarus came out from the tomb, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. (Jn 11:43-44) There are many Lazarus who are dead spiritually and are lying in their tombs. They all need to hear the voice of Jesus for their salvation. Bring them to Jesus so that they may hear the word of Jesus for their eternal life. As we studied last week, even one who had little desire to be healed, like the invalid man, had a chance to hear Jesus’ word and be healed. Amen!

In verses 28-30 Jesus taught them eschatological predictions about resurrection. Jesus illustrated the destiny of the righteous and the evil in the end times. Look at verses 28-30. “***Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out---those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned. 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.***” When Jesus comes again to judge the world, all those who are in the grave will rise again. Those who did what is good will rise to live and those who did evil will rise to be condemned. Hebrews says that death is not the end of everything, but after death we all will be judged to eternal life and eternal death. The believers will rise and what we have believed will be confirmed. But the unbelievers will rise and their unbelief will be condemned. (Jn 3:18) How can Jesus distinguish the living from the dead? He will recognize them through the stain of his blood. Those who have the mark of the blood of Jesus will rise to live and those who don’t have it will rise to be condemned. As Rahab in Jericho was saved with all her family because of the scarlet cord, so those who have the mark of the scarlet blood of the lamb will be saved.

Thus far Jesus defended himself by the authority which was given him from God the Father. Now he introduces the witnesses who testified about himself and endorsed his work. According to Jewish custom, a testimony for oneself is not valid. (31,32) Testimonies from two or more other witnesses are valid in the court. Who are the witnesses who testified about Jesus? Here the words witness (*martys*) and testify *(martyreo)* have the same root in Greek. The word martyr and martyrdom came from the word *martys* and *martyreo*. First, Jesus mentioned John the Baptist as his witness. In verses 33-35 Jesus said, “***You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth. Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved. John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light***.” John the Baptist said to his disciples when Jesus came toward him, “*Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*” (Jn 1:29) Second, the signs and wonders which Jesus did testified that Jesus is the Son of God. In verse 36 Jesus said, “***I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing---testify that the Father has sent me***.” Jesus changed water into wine. Jesus healed the dying son of a royal official. Jesus raised the man who had been invalid for 38 years. What else did Jesus have to do to provide evidence and prove his power and authority as the Son of God? Jesus walked on the water. He fed five thousand with five loaves of bread and two small fish. He opened the eyes of the blind and raised the dead man Lazarus. Third, God himself testified about Jesus. Look at verses 37,38. “***And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent***.” God the Father endorsed Jesus’ sonship when John the Baptist baptized Jesus. (Mt 3:17,Mk 1:11) God also said to Jesus’ disciples on the Transfiguration Mount, “*This is my Son, whom I love… Listen to him!*” (Mt 17:5, Mk 9:7, Lk 9:35)

The Old Testament testified about Jesus. God testified concerning Jesus through the Scriptures. From Genesis to Malachi all the Scriptures talk about Jesus and foretold his coming to fulfill God’s promise. Jesus is the focal point of the Old Testament and he is the fulfillment of all the prophecies and the laws. So, Jesus said in verses 39-40. “***You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life***.” When we study the Bible, we come to believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Promised Messiah. Jesus is like a thread to tie all the pearls to make a beautiful necklace. Without Jesus, all the Scriptures go nowhere. This is the reason we don’t understand the Bible without applying Jesus to all the books of the Bible.

While Jesus was defending himself, he pointed out the problems of the Jewish leaders who were accusing him. First, they studied the Scriptures in vain because they left Jesus out from the Scriptures. Second, they had no love of God in their hearts. Look at verses 41-42. “***I do not accept glory from human beings, but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts***.” The motivation of all our activities of righteousness should be ‘love’. Our Bible study, prayer, worshiping, teaching, visiting, and doing charitable works must be done with the love of God. The entire Scriptures also teach us how God loves his people despite their unfaithfulness. The Scriptures reveals God’s divine nature which is love. God is love. God sent his Son Jesus Christ to this world because he loved us. Without the presence of God’s love, all our activities will be pointless and in vain. The Jewish leaders studied the Scriptures diligently, thinking that in them they have eternal life. Indeed, there is the way of salvation in the Scripture. But they did not know that Jesus is the way and that he is the answer. They did not have the love of God in their hearts because they didn’t think they needed the love of God for their salvation. They were wrong. They were badly mistaken.

I pray that we may worship God with the love of God. We worship Him because we love him. Worship is the expression of our love for God, faith in Him, and gratitude toward Him. When we share bread with our brothers and sisters with the love of God, it is meaningful and valuable. When we study the Bible with the love of God, we know him more, experience him deeper, and glorify him higher. In verse 24 Jesus said that those who hear his words and believe the one who sent him have eternal life and will not be judged, but have crossed over from death to life. I pray that when Jesus comes to judge the world, we may all rise to live, not to be condemned. Amen!