

Mountain View 21 — Jesus, Equal With God

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Passages	John 5:9-18
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Introduction (Connection):

[Invite to John 5]

Next Sunday we begin our Advent sermon series called God With Us, and I'm super excited.

In January, we have some special guest speakers planned, including the president of Global Renewal, an international church planting ministry and the executive director of The Northeast Collaborative, an organization dedicated to resourcing, revitalizing and planting local churches in Northeast America.

That means we'll be taking a break from our series through the Gospel of John for the next month or two.

So while I've told you what lies ahead, let me quickly recap where we've been for the last 21 weeks that's brought us half-way through John 5.

Tension:

That may not sound like we've covered much, but this is a lot, and all that has been included for a very specific purpose that John writes about at the end of this book.

Who remembers why John said he wrote this book? The answer is in...

John 20:31 — “these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

A crucial thing that John then has to do to accomplish this is establish which categories of creation Jesus has authority over.

Right off the bat in 1:1 we saw that Jesus, the Word, has authority over all creation, that everything was made by Jesus for Jesus.

Like, Jesus has the authority where during the creation of the universe he said, I'm going to make an ostrich look like this, to make your eyes to be brown or blue or green.

Then we saw, with John the Baptist, that Jesus has the authority to take away the sin of the world.

With changing Simon's name to Peter, we saw that Jesus carries the authority to change human identities.

At the wedding of Cana, we saw that Jesus has authority to overturn the old means of ritual purification and replace it with new, better wine, which is the New Covenant, a.k.a the Gospel.

At the temple, we saw that Jesus has the authority to undo the confinement of God's presence among humanity being the temple and unleashed the presence of God to invade the lives of those who have faith in Jesus.

In his conversation with Nicodemus, we saw Jesus has the authority to overturn the old means of salvation as keeping the law and usher in a new era where salvation is by faith alone in new birth.

With the woman at the well, we saw that Jesus has the authority over our pasts and to utilize us for future ministry.

With the healing of the official's son, we saw Jesus carries the authority to miraculously heal an illness from miles away with just a word.

And last week, part one of the two-part story we're finishing up today, we saw that Jesus has authority to heal permanent brokenness of all categories, physical or spiritual.

Today we'll be introduced to another category over which Jesus has authority.

Exposition:

Remember, Jesus just approached this invalid of 38 years, asked him if he wanted to be healed, the guy explained that the pool wasn't working to heal him and Jesus immediately speaks healing over this man.

He gets up, takes up his bed, and walks... after 38 years of crawling or being carried.

Now we pick up in v. 9.

John 5:9-18 — ***And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. ¹⁰ 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." ¹¹ But he answered them, "The man who healed me, that man said to me, 'Take up your bed, and walk.' " ¹² They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and***

walk'?" ¹³ 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.

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." ¹⁵ The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. ¹⁶ And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁷ But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." 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.¹

v. 9 contains a massive shift in the story, doesn't it?

This man was just miraculously healed after 38 years, the hallelujah chorus was blaring, birds were chirping, and then the music stops, the birds fly away like a strong storm is about to roll in, the music shifts to a powerful discord in minor, and the ominous clouds roll in...

Now that day was the Sabbath.

The dark side of the story gets introduced.

The Sabbath was one of the most precious treasures of Jewish culture; one day a week, everyone rested.

These Jewish leaders² are in the colonnades among the multitude of sick, blind, lame, invalids, and they see one of them who they had served for a

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn 5:9–18.

² The Greek word *loudaioi* refers specifically here to Jewish religious leaders, and others under their influence, who opposed Jesus in that time; also verses 15, 16, 18
[*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016).

long time now, who clearly looked like he belonged among the invalids, now walking and carrying his bed.

And what do they say to him: "No way man! You're walking?!?! What happened? Is this a prank? Have you been pretending to be paralyzed for 38 years, because that is not a good prank? You were healed? Praise God! Who healed you? We need to find him!"

No, what is it that they see? Their Sabbath laws were being broken.

Like, how dull do you have to be?

These Jewish leaders didn't care a bit about the miraculous work that had been done; all they see is law-breaking.

They think they see what's important, but usually those who believe they see most clearly are usually the most blind.

They didn't care about the well-being of the people; they cared about their rules and traditions.

The Jewish leaders were looking at this newly healed man and only seeing an outward behavior that wasn't aligning with their laws and they confront him.

You see, without Jesus, all some people can offer you is behavior modification.

For however many years this man was lying among the invalids, the Jews could only offer him law-keeping and behavior modification... Jesus comes along and offers complete healing.

They couldn't change his inside at all, so they worked really hard to manipulate his life on the outside.

A lot of systems will preach moralistic behavior modification, meaning you need to align what you do with these things; that is not the gospel.

After service last Sunday, Austin came up after the service and shared with me that God had given him an opportunity to preach the gospel to a friend and lead him to Christ.

Austin said that too often he's messed up the gospel presentation because he starts telling them, "Start doing this, stop doing this, keep doing this..." but he said this time, "Na man, just trust in Jesus alone; that's it. No works."

That's the gospel; that is what Jesus offers: belief alone brings radical healing to our brokenness, not aligning our actions with certain behaviors taught by manipulative leaders.

Back to the story again, the healed man passes the blame of his law breaking onto Jesus: "the guy who healed me told me to do this."

And now the Jews are angry; "There's someone telling people to break the law? We have to find him."

Since Jesus is God, perfect in holiness, would Jesus ever command this man to do something that would break a law that He wrote? Absolutely not!

So then what is happening here? Why is this man and Jesus accused of breaking laws about keeping the Sabbath? What law was he breaking?

The Old Testament had forbidden work on the Sabbath. But what does 'work' mean?

The clearest conclusion is employment; what you do for work Monday through Friday, you don't do on the Sabbath.

So unless this guy worked for the local mattress firm, he isn't breaking any biblical law.

Here's what's happening: for many years, Jewish Rabbis had passed on from one generation to the next something they called the Oral Law, which was later written down into something called the *Mishnah*.

Concerning the Sabbath, they had analyzed the broken down the Sabbath prohibition into 39 different classes of 'work,' which included taking or carrying anything from one domain to another.³

This guy wasn't breaking an Old Testament law, he was breaking the laws the Jewish leaders had formulated for holiness.

So now the Jews' zeal for law-keeping takes on a different meaning, because no longer were they concerned about them keeping God's Laws, but more so people keeping their laws, their understanding of morality.

Jesus hasn't conflicted the law he wrote with his own hand, he broke the law of men who elevated themselves to the position of law-giver, making their own laws, calling out failures to keep their laws, seeking to preserve the sanctity of their laws.

Do we not do this as well?

We so easily elevate ourselves to the authority of Law-giver when...

- We condemn someone for drinking alcohol in moderation.

³ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 244.

- When we require that someone has to say 20 "Hail Mary's" in order for their sin to be forgiven.
- When we require that a church only use the King James Version because that's how the Apostle Paul spoke.
- When we condemn "dating" and insist of a certain exact structure for proper "courtship."

We can so easily create our own rules for morality and then force them upon others, and when we do that, we're stepping into an area of authority that we don't possess.

What I am about to tell you is important: **We do not have authority over morality.**

You and I do not bear the authority to create standards and laws around what is right and wrong, despite what our society tells us.

Our society is driven by a morality that says, "If it feels right, then it is right," creating Moral Individualism, meaning I get to define my own morality as an individual and it governs me.

And if that is the case for everyone, then that inevitably leads us right down the short road to Moral Relativism, which means what is right and wrong is no longer a standard, but what you make it to be.

"What is true for you is true for you." No longer is morality a standard.

What these Jews were doing was trying to preserve among the generations a morality that they believed was given by God, but ultimately was fashioned in their own domain of authority—their own hearts and minds.

So in comes Jesus and totally ruins their morality standards concerning the Sabbath, over and over again as v. 16 suggests.

Finally Jesus responds to them. He says in v. 17, ***“My Father is working until now, and I am working.”***

In other words, “God, who is my dad, is working on the Sabbath, and I am too.”

Here’s the logic behind his argument: Does God actually stop doing everything on the Sabbath?

If you say yes, then you’re believing in a different god that I can’t find in the Bible.

At every second God is holding all the trillions of stars in every one of the billions of galaxies into place.

He is sustaining the bonds between every molecule of oxygen that we breath in every second.

He is maintaining the finely tuned metric of gravity on our planet.

So if God were to stop all work on the Sabbath, what would happen? It’d be like a movie montage of everything exploding.

We’d fly off into space, oxygen would fall apart, and galaxies would collapse.

Praise God that he isn’t subject to the laws we make about morality; he keeps working on the Sabbath in a life-sustaining way.

And if God is working on the Sabbath, so is His Son Jesus...

Jesus isn’t constrained by our man-made standards of morality... he’s on a totally different level of authority... which is where we’re going next.

Check out...

v. 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.”

What Jesus said in v. 17 communicated to the Jewish leaders that Jesus was making himself out to be equal with God.

Now they weren't only angry with him for breaking Sabbath Laws, he was committing blasphemy of the highest order... unless it was true.

Jesus wasn't making himself out to be another God or as a competing God, but as being the same as God who has all authority, who isn't constrained by our standards of morality but has the authority to calibrate our morality.

Application/Challenge:

That's actually how we're going to land this today.

Jesus wasn't willing to fit into the mold of morality the Jewish leaders had crafted in their ignorance.

Instead, Jesus was working to calibrate our morality, especially throughout his whole ministry.

Like in Matthew 5, he shows us that morality isn't just simply external actions, but matters of the heart.

It isn't just murder, its hatred.

It isn't just adultery, its lust.

It isn't just stealing, its envy.

It isn't just boasting, its pride.

Or which matters more, not doing work on the Sabbath or healing and forgiving sin?

Jesus was contesting the standards of morality in his day throughout his whole ministry.

But if Jesus was just another man, it means nothing, right?

If Jesus was another human being just like you and me, what difference does his contestations make?

That's why v. 18 is such a big deal, because he wasn't just another man; Jesus was God and God has all authority.

Therefore...

Jesus has authority to calibrate our morality because of his equality.

If you and I cannot agree with the full deity of Christ, then, sure, there is no reason for you to feel the impulse to allow Jesus to calibrate your morality.

However, if you agree with God and His word that Jesus was God incarnate, equal with God, that the fullness of deity dwelled bodily in Jesus, then you and I have to, yes, *have to* allow Jesus in to calibrate our morality, because he has equal authority with God, the giver of all morality.

You and I, as followers of Jesus, do not get the authority to say to Jesus, "Yea, I'll agree with you that this and this is wrong, but I'm going to hold onto this because I don't think it's wrong."

We weren't endowed with that level of authority!

Isn't that a huge relief though?

Studies show more people today want to believe that morality is a standard given to us.⁴

Jesus alone answers what the world is truly craving: one who has all authority to calibrate morality across generations and whole societies.

Therefore, when you and I come to Jesus, when we claim to carry his banner as the Son of God, we must allow him to enter into what we believe to be right and wrong and to calibrate it to his standards, which we most clearly see in his word.

Whether it's the issue of homosexuality, or tax evasion, or alcohol, or which version of the bible to use, Jesus has the authority to calibrate our morality in every category of humanity because of his equality with God.

Conclusion (Cast Vision):

I mean, how desperately do you even long for Jesus to do this?

Because this doesn't just calibrate the way we think about what is right and wrong, this then calibrates how you live and what you love.

This literally draws battle line for our war against sin.

In other words, whether or not you live a life that God delights in rides on whether or not you're saying to Jesus, "You are the authority over my life, show me what is right and wrong, and lead me in paths of righteousness for your name sake."

Is our church going to be known as the church most desperate for God to calibrate our morality to his standards?

⁴ Rabbi Geoffrey A. Mitelman, "Do We Create Our Own Morality?" (article, HuffPost, September 20, 2011) available online at https://www.huffpost.com/entry/do-we-create-our-own-mora_b_966367 [accessed online November 22, 2019].

Let's beg for that in prayer now.

[Pray]