

JESUS GIVES ETERNAL LIFE

John 5:16-30

Key Verse: 5:24

“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.”

Last week, we learned how Jesus healed an invalid man who had been lying on his mat for 38 years. It was a great work of God. However, where there was a work of God, there was a work of Satan. In today’s passage, the Jews persecute Jesus for breaking the Sabbath law by healing the invalid. In response, Jesus teaches them how they can overcome their legalism and receive eternal life. May God bless us to hear his word and believe in him so that we may have eternal life!

I. “MY FATHER IS ALWAYS AT HIS WORK” (16-23)

Look at verse 16. *“So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him.”* It was time for the Jews to praise God for the life-giving work of God. Jesus healed a person who had been suffering for 38 years. It was a miracle. But the Jews did not care about the work of God. They only paid attention to the Sabbath law. Instead of praising God, they persecuted Jesus. They trivialized the work of God because of their legalism. Likewise, let us ask ourselves if we trivialize the work of God in and around us by falling into legalism.

Jesus often rebuked the Jews for their blind legalism on the matter of Sabbath. God made the seventh day holy so that his people may come to him and find rest in him. The fourth commandment says: “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” (Ex 20:8). God commanded us to keep the Sabbath holy. However, the Jews added many more laws of their own concerning the Sabbath. For example, they considered carrying anything heavier than two dried figs a violation of the law. They were not to travel more than $\frac{3}{4}$ mile (Ac 1:12). Even today, some Jewish people hire a “Shabbat goy” (non-Jew) to turn off lights or to take care of heating on Sabbath. Moses had told his people not to do work on Sabbath. The intention was to help them to worship God rather than engaging in business. However, the Jews lost the spirit of the law and blindly enforced it.

Once Jesus healed a crippled woman who was bent over for 18 years (Lk 13:10-13). With her hunched back, this woman suffered a lot. Jesus understood her sorrow and healed her. But the Jews ignored the work of God and persecuted Jesus because the healing happened on a Sabbath day. This is what Jesus told them: “You hypocrites! Doesn’t each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?” (Lk 13:15-16) Jesus taught them the true meaning of the Sabbath.

On another Sabbath, Jesus and his disciples were going through a grain field. The disciples were hungry and they began to pick some heads of grain to eat. The Pharisees accused them of breaking the Sabbath law. Jesus rebuked them for their lack of compassion and told them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (Mk 2:27,28).

It is true that God does not want us to spend the Sabbath day, minding only our own business or seeking physical pleasures. But not working on Sunday does not mean we are keeping the day holy. The Jews got it all wrong! Lying on bed all day would not glorify God. Rather we should come to God and worship him actively. We must worship God with all our hearts, expressing our love for him, not passively but actively. We should be doing what pleases God. This includes taking care of his sheep. God wants us to gather together in his name and sing, pray, and hear the word of God and have fellowship with him and with each other. One UBF missionary helped her Bible student to worship God by giving her ride on each Sunday. The student lived 30 miles from the church, so the missionary had to drive 120 miles each Sunday. The missionary did this for four years. But as soon as the student got her driver’s license, she stopped coming to the worship service, saying that she did not want to spend her own gas money. But the missionary didn’t complain. Instead, she thanked God for the privilege of serving the Lord on the Sabbath.

What did Jesus teach the Jews who persecuted him for healing an invalid on the Sabbath? Look at verse 17. *Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.”* God does not stop working on the Sabbath day. What will happen to this world if God stops working on the Sabbath? What if you have an emergency on Sunday and pray to God for help, but God says that he is closed for the Sabbath? Jesus teaches that God is doing his redemptive work, even on the Sabbath. His door is always open. Jesus healed the invalid man out of his compassion. It was the work of God. Jesus came to do the redemptive work of God on weekends as well as week days.

How did the Jews react to Jesus who taught the truth of God about the Sabbath? Look at verse 18. *For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.* The Jews not only rejected the truth of God as taught by Jesus, but became angry with him. They wanted to kill Jesus, because he called God “my Father.” Jesus taught them he is the Son of God who came to save them from their sin and death. Jesus also taught them that God is our heavenly Father who loves us. To the Jews, God was so holy that they could not approach him. God was someone who was very distant from them. But Jesus taught them that God is our heavenly Father who knows us and cares for us. He loves us as a father loves his son. We can have a loving relationship with our heavenly Father. We can call him “Abba, Father!” The Lord’s Prayer begins with “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name” (Mt 6:9).

Look at verses 19-20. *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. 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.”*

Jesus says that he does whatever God does. Now this is a wonderful truth to know. From the dawn of history, people have wondered what God is doing. What is God's purpose for our lives? How can we see God at work? But Jesus teaches us here that we can see what God is doing by looking at what Jesus is doing. Jesus knows the heart of God toward all sinners. Jesus always carries out the will of God. Jesus mentions two particular things that he does to carry out the will of God.

First, the Son gives life. Look at verse 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.* Jesus gives life to those who come to him. You might say that you already have life. There are two kinds of life, physical life and eternal life. Today, we live with material abundance that our ancestors did not have. We can drive automobiles and surf the Internet. The world is literally on our fingertips as we hold in our hand an iPhone or Galaxy Note 2. We enjoy the comfort and convenience of modern technology. So our life should be fuller than our ancestors'. Unfortunately, this doesn't seem to be the case. In our fast-food culture, we have less time to enjoy fellowship with God or fellowship with each other. As we seek for material comfort and physical pleasures, we have less and less room for God in our hearts. We often forget that human life is not only physical but also spiritual (Jn 6:63). Some people do crazy things to find life. They abuse their bodies, pouring things, injecting things into themselves in an effort to find life. They corrupt their own character to find that elusive "life." But verse 21 says that we cannot find true life in some "things" of this world. Only the Son of God gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. This life is "eternal" life. This life is much more than mere existence. It is enduring, but also enriching. It cannot be diminished by circumstances or ended by physical death. This wonderful eternal life is given to all of us when we come to Jesus.

There are many people who received this life from Jesus. Once a sinful woman was caught in the act of adultery and was brought to Jesus by the Jews. They asked him whether she deserved a death penalty. The Law of Moses said that such a woman be stoned to death. But Jesus said, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (Jn 8:7). Jesus did not condemn her but gave her a new life. He said to her, "Go now and leave your life of sin." Our Lord Jesus is the giver of a new life to those who come to him.

Second, Jesus is the Judge. Let's read verses 22-23. *Moreover, 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. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.* Jesus not only gives life to those who come to him, but also has the authority to judge all men. People pass judgment on others based on things like how much money the person makes, what position he holds, how famous the person is, or if the person has the same ideology as theirs. Even Supreme Court Justices often make decisions based on their own ideology or politics. But God entrusted Jesus, the Son of God, as the ultimate Judge. In his first coming, Jesus was born to a poor couple and lived as a suffering servant all his life. Finally, he died on the cross as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. But in his return, Jesus will come as the Judge of the living and the

dead. All of us will stand before him on the Day of Judgment. God wants us to honor Jesus as the ultimate Judge so that we may honor God.

The Jews in this passage, however, did not honor God. They saw with their own eyes how Jesus healed the invalid of 38 years. They saw the work of God but did not honor Jesus. They did not honor God. In this way, they invited judgment upon themselves. When men love the darkness and hate God, they invite eternal condemnation upon themselves (Jn 3:19,20). Still Jesus loved them. He had a wonderful promise of God to tell them.

II. "WHOEVER HEARS MY WORD" (24-30)

Look at verse 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."* This verse is a wonderful promise of God for all sinners like you and me. This verse gives hope to all those who are condemned because of their sins, which is every one of us. There is no exception, not even one. Jesus promises us eternal life. This is the reason why he came to this world, to serve sinners like us and to give his life on the cross for us. Let us read this verse once again. *"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 first step to receive eternal life is to hear the word of God. Without hearing the word of God, no one can believe. Romans 10:14 says, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" This is the reason why we devote so much time and effort to Bible studies in our fellowship.

Hearing the word of God is very important. Verse 24 says that those who hear the word of God and believe in Jesus have eternal life. The way of salvation is very simple. The problem is that people want to hear only what they want to hear. They hear the word of God, but only selectively. The Jews heard the word of God, but because they were full of themselves, it was as though they did not hear anything. When we really hear the word of God, we believe in Jesus who was sent by God to save us from our sins. We commit our lives to him. Then God gives us eternal life. We have crossed over from death to life!

Eternal life begins when we hear the word of God and believe in Jesus. **First**, those who have eternal life can have the life of God in them at the present time (Jn 11:25). Eternal life begins here and now for those who believe in Jesus. We have no fear of death if we are sure that we will live eternally. **Second**, when we hear the word of God and believe in Jesus, we will not be condemned no matter what kind of sin we committed in the past. We are declared "not guilty" because of the blood of Jesus that washed away all our sins. **Third**, those who hear the word of God and believe in Jesus have crossed over from death to life. Many people try hard to overcome the fear of death. But the more they try, the more they realize that they have no control over death. They are in the bondage of sin and death; they cannot overcome the power of death, even with modern technology. But those who hear the word of God and believe in Jesus have no fear of death, because they have crossed over from death to life. We don't know what will happen to our life tomorrow. We

don't know when God will call us home. But we do know that when our life is done in this world, we will be with Jesus in the kingdom of God. Do you have this assurance?

Look at verses 28-29. *“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 good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.* Many young people don't look beyond their school, job, what to eat and what to wear, and small pleasures in life. They say YOLO (you only live once). They don't ask such important questions as: “where are we coming from, why are we here, and what will happen when we are finished in this world?” But when these young people study the Bible and hear the word of Christ and believe him, they are no longer amazed by his teachings on eternal life and eternal condemnation. Jesus says, “a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.” A man named Lazarus died and was buried with his body beginning to decompose. But when Jesus called out, “Lazarus, come out!” he heard the voice of Jesus and walked out of the tomb with his grave clothes still on him (Jn 11:43-44). A 12-year old girl died leaving behind her grieving mother and father. But when Jesus said to her, “Talitha koum!” (which means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”) she heard the voice of Jesus. Immediately she got up and walked around (Mk 5:41-42). Both Lazarus and the little girl heard the voice of Jesus. But these are only a preview of what will happen to all of us in the day of the Lord. Jesus says in verse 25: *“I tell you the truth, 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.”*

Look at verse 29 again. *“...and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.”* On the day of the Lord, all dead people of the world will hear the voice of Jesus. Everyone will rise to live, both the followers of Christ and those who refuse to believe him. The difference is that those who have done good will rise to live forever, but those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. What does it mean to do good? Romans 2:7-8 explains: “To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.” Faith is not a vague notion or an abstract idea. Faith requires action. A person's action really shows his or her faith in God. The Sovereign God will reward those who have been faithful, but those who have followed evil will be condemned forever. We can do good in God's eyes when we obey his word, walk in fellowship with him and share his word of life with others.

In today's passage, we learned about a wonderful promise that whoever hears the word of God and believes in Jesus has eternal life. He has crossed over from death to life. May God help us to hear the word of God and believe in Jesus! May God help each one of us to have the assurance of eternal life in Jesus!