**CROSSED OVER FROM DEATH TO LIFE**

November 13, 2016

John 5:16-30

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.”

The purpose of John’s gospel is stated in John 20:31, “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” In the previous passage we studied that Jesus healed a man who had been an invalid for 38-years on the Sabbath day. Many young people lie in their mat of despair and fatalism, and only complain. Jesus commands, “Get up. Pick up your mat and walk!” Jesus wants them to hear his word and have life in his name. In today’s passage the Jews accuse Jesus of violating the Sabbath law by healing the paralytic. They are not concerned about the invalid man – they do not even acknowledge that he has been healed – let alone rejoice over it. Their only concern is that the rules concerning the Sabbath have been broken. Jesus defends his actions by pointing out that he is merely imitating his father. Jesus states that God’s creative and sustaining work upon which the world depends has never ceased nor will it. He says, “My Father is always at work to this very day, and I too am working.” The Jews immediately grasp what he was saying. Jesus is stating that he is equal with God. The religious leaders did not reject Christ because they did not understand who he claimed to be, they understood perfectly, and rejected him because of these claims. The religious leaders changed their charge against Jesus from “breaking the Sabbath” to “blasphemy” because Jesus claimed to be God.

In response to the challenge by the religious leaders, Jesus makes three claims about who he is.

**First**, Jesus claims equality with the Father; He is the Son Of God. 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.’” The first statement that Jesus makes is an assertion that everything that the God the Father does, he does. The only possible conclusion is not lost on the religious leaders, and it is that Jesus is claiming to be God. For not only is the God “the” Father, God is “His” Father. Today we more or less take it for granted that God is to be spoken of as “Father” but this was not the way it was in the first century. The Jews would sometimes refer to God as “the Father” but they would usually add something like “in heaven” to make it clear they were not being too intimate. But when Jesus uses the term “my Father” it was a claim to special intimacy and the Jews recognized it as such. Jesus is claiming a relationship to the Father which cannot be applied to any other being in the universe; He is the only begotten Son of God. Jesus turns their accusations on its head. Their accusation was; “How can you dare to presume to act and speak as if you were God!” Jesus turns the accusation around to say, “If I am God, how is it possible for me to act and speak in any other way?”

**Second**, Jesus claims power to give life. (21, 24-26) Beyond his claim that he is equal with the Father, he claims that as the Son of God he is the giver of 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.” The Old Testament clearly teaches that only God could give life or raise the dead to new life. Deuteronomy 32:39 says, “See now that I myself am he! There is no god beside me. I put to death and I bring to life. I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand.”

1 Samuel 2:6 says, “The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up.” When Jesus claims to be able to give life, he is clearly claiming to be God.

Here “the dead” refers not only the physically dead, but also the spiritually dead. Those who do not believe in Jesus Christ are spiritually dead. Originally Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden with the tree of life. They lived happily having fellowship with God. But they had to keep the order by not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God warned them clearly, “but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” But they disobeyed God, and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Then they crossed over from life to death. They were kicked out of the Garden of Eden. Even though people may be physically alive, they are dead spiritually. In the time of technology, most people are living in material abundance. People enjoy bits and pieces of comfort and convenience and can make money according to their ability. So they should be happy. Strangely, instead of being happy there are many fatalistic people. It is because they are dead spiritually. Several years ago there was a horrible incident in Arizona involving one troubled young man shooting six people dead and 14 others wounded. He was a high school dropout and played online games and liked to post many ramblings on his website. All the technological advancements cannot make him alive. They made him worse. It could have been better if he worked on a farm without all these technologies. These days, Silicon Valley billionaires are pouring money into research to conquer death. Peter Thiel, the billionaire co-founder of PayPal, Larry Ellison, co-founder of Oracle, and Sergey Brin, co-founder of Google, are among them. But they are already dead, and cannot obtain life. They are like flowers in a vase. They look alive, but they are dead. There is only one way enter life. It is through Jesus Christ.

Look at verses 24-25. “Very truly, I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes in him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death into life. 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.” Look at verse 24 carefully. Jesus used three tenses here--present, future, and present perfect. Firstly, those who have eternal life can have the life of God in them at the present (Jn 11:25). Eternal life does not come after death; those who believe have eternal life now, life with God and fellowship with God, life with meaning and purpose in God. When we have eternal life, we are never lonely because God is with us. When we have eternal life, we are free from condemnation, and free from anxiety from all things. Secondly, when we hear the word of God and believe, we will not be condemned in the future: We are free from experiencing the judgment of God in our daily life (2Cor 5:10). Thirdly, those who hear the word of God and believe have crossed over from death to life as a matter of past event. When we believe, the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in our heart, and makes us alive. Romans 8:11 says, “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.”

What does it mean to cross over from death to life? It means that we are no longer under the power of death. Death plans fear. Sickness is a problem in life, but the bigger problem is fear from it. There are unexpected problems in life, but the bigger problem is fear of uncertainty. Fear takes away our faith, and plants doubt and worry. At the end of worrying and doubts there is death. But in the world of life, there is no fear. Instead of fear, we pray to God trusting in Jesus. When we pray, fear disappears and hope fills our hearts. The peace which transcends all understanding comes and joy overflows. Our face becomes bright and our eyes sparkle. When we are in the world of life, we begin to see the world with the eyes of faith. When we look at the world with the eyes of death, there is only fear. But when we look at the world with the eyes of faith, there is life around. Those who are under the power of death say, “I am doomed,” when they face difficulties. But those who are in life say, “Victory comes from finding opportunities in problems.” (Sun Tzu)

Those who believe in Jesus are living in the world of life. They have crossed over from death to life. However, we live in the flesh. We still live with sinful desires. So from time to time, we are under the influence of death. So we become fearful and overwhelmed with worry. Once D.L. Moody prayed very earnestly during breakfast for rain because of drought. When he was leaving home, his 10 year old son gave him an umbrella. Moody gave him a perplexed look, “Why umbrella?” His son said, “You prayed for rain just now.” Because of this incident, Moody learned newly about faith. When we pray, many times we do not believe. Because our reason and experience prevent us from believing. We have to overcome them by faith. How? By hearing Jesus’ word and believing it.

**Third**, Jesus claims the authority to judge. (22, 27-30) Look at verse 22 and 27. “Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son…And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.” The Son of Man can be a very exalted, even divine, title from Daniel 7:13. But here the emphasis falls on another qualification besides the exalted divine one—the judge of the universe, the one who raises them all from the dead and passes judgment on them must be a son of man, that is, must be a vulnerable human. Namely, a suffering, slain man will judge the world. Revelation 5:12 says, “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” God intends that the one who judges the world will be a slain lamb, a crucified man. The judging Son of God at the last day must first be a suffering son of man. Why must our judge be a man—a suffering man? The answer is that God deems it fitting that human beings be judged by one who knows what it is like to be human. And not just any human, but one who suffered to deliver the rest of us from judgment. There is something suitable that the one who sentences men to heaven or to hell would be a suffering Savior—that the judge of all men will be able to look into every eye and say, “I too was tempted. I too suffered.”

Those who are bound by attachment to the world will be amazed to hear about eternal life, and especially, eternal condemnation. But the most important thing is hearing and believing in the Son’s voice. The second part of verses 28,29 says, “...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.” The main point here is that Jesus raises all the dead. Let that sink in. All the dead who have ever lived will be raised from the dead by Jesus. Millions of Chinese and Canadians and Americans. He will raise Julius Caesar from the dead, and Judas Iscariot, and Isaiah the prophet, and Adolf Hitler, and Michael Jackson. He will raise them, and they will stand before him. And you too. All these people and millions more—all people, without exception, will be raised from the dead by Jesus. The wicked will wake up to be condemned. Here the wicked do not merely refer to the murderers and the sexually immoral. They refer to those who did not believe in Jesus Christ. They are condemned not because they are sexually immoral or committed murder, but because they did not accept Jesus as the Son of God. On the other hand, the righteous will wake up to be like Jesus. This doesn’t mean that we are justified by our good works. Believing in Jesus will empower us to do good works, and if we are united to Christ we will bear the fruit of good works. We will rise from the dead and face him some day—the one who was humanly tempted like we are. And he will look at our life—not for perfection but simply for the evidence that we trusted in him and believed in him.

Look at verse 25 again. “The dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.” In order to hear Jesus’ voice, we need to do two things:

Firstly, we need to study the Bible. Look at verse 39. “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me.” The Bible is the very word of God. God speaks through his word. But if we study the Bible without believing in Jesus, we cannot have life. The prince of Grenada, an heir to the Spanish crown, was sentenced to life in solitary confinement in Madrid’s ancient prison called “The Place of the Skull.” The fearful, dirty, and the dreary nature of the place earned it the name. Everyone knew that once you were in, you would never come out alive. The prince was given one book to read the entire time—the Bible. With only one book to read, he read it over hundreds and hundreds of times. After 33 years of imprisonment, he died. He recorded several things. Psalm 118:8 is the verse exactly in the middle of the Bible. Esther 8:9 is the longest verse in the Bible. Ezra 7:21 contains all the alphabets except J. He spent 33 years in studying the Bible, but he only became an expert in the Bible trivia. He could have become a champion in Bible Jeopardy, but he did not have life in Jesus.

Secondly, we have to seek God’s glory. Look at verse 44. “How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?” Only when we love God and seek God’s glory, we can believe in Jesus and have life. In order to receive glory, many theologians invent many strange theories which try to destroy the Bible. Last year, there was a divinity professor at Harvard University who found a scroll which says that Jesus had a wife. She became very famous. But it turned out to be a forgery. These kinds of people cannot believe in Jesus, and their research is useless and they are still in the world of death. But if we study the Bible by believing that Jesus is the Son of God and by seeking God’s glory, we have life. We have crossed over from death to life. We must hear and believe God’s word, even one word of God. May God bless you to hear God’s word and believe, and enjoy eternal life at the present.