**God is Always at Work Around You**

January 5, 2020

John 5:17-20

Key Verse 5:17 “Jesus said to them, ‘My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.’”

Many people ask, “What is God’s will for my life?” It is a wrong question to ask because it is self-centered. We often determine what God’s will for our life is by ourselves, and go and do it on our own. Anytime we need him, we call on him and ask his help. That is not a Biblical picture. The right question to ask is, “What is God’s will and what is God doing right now?” Then I need to adjust my life to participate in him. Then God will accomplish his work through his servant. Here the key is that God is always working and that is where I should be. When I was a young Christian, I did not know this principle. I did my own thing. For example, when Dr. Samuel Lee celebrated his 60th birthday, I was doing one to one Bible study. I thought that I needed to build up my one to one numbers for that week. But I ended up missing God’s great work through Dr. Samuel Lee. Many people have their own agenda and their own plan and they ask God to bless their plan. It is not serving the Lord. In order to serve God, we have to watch where God is working around us, and join him in his work. We have to move away from my way of doing things to God’s ways, move away from my purposes to working on God’s purposes, move away from my way of thinking to God’s way of thinking. I pray that God may open our spiritual eyes to have 20/20 vision in the new year 2020 to see where God is working and that God may give us courage to join him in his work.

**First,** we need to open our spiritual eyes to see God at work. Look at verse 17. “My Father is always working!” Then he adds “To this very day.” The NLT translates verse 17 as “My Father never stops working…” God has been working always since the creation to accomplish his purpose in and around us. When Adam and Eve were disobedient to the commands of God, sin entered the world. Ever since then God has been actively working through people to reconcile them to himself. Even today God is working to bring about redemption to those who are alienated from him and who are destined to judgment and eternal separation. God the Father is working through His Son Jesus to reconcile the world to himself, and he has chosen to accomplish his will and purpose by using his people, that is us. As God continues to move in his mission, he seeks to move people into the area of his activity and so God wants us to be a part of what he is already doing.

Many times, we do not see God’s work due to our poor spiritual sight. We are blind due to our self-centeredness. Many people spend their entire life asking God, “What am I supposed to do for you? In what ministry do you want me to serve you?” Even though those are noble questions, they are the wrong questions to ask. Why? Because it puts the focus on you rather than God. Sometimes we assume that every question is the right question. One seminary professor often told his students, “If you ask the wrong question, you are going to get the wrong answer.” Remember if you keep coming up with the wrong answer, you need to check the question. So what is the right question? The one Jesus continually asked God was, “God, what is your will?” Don’t ask, “God, what can I do?” But ask, “What is God doing where I am?” Now the focus has moved from my life to God. That is where you find your answers. “How can I see God at work?” That is why we pray to have 20/20 vision in the year 2020 so that we may see God’s work around us and join him.

Jesus modeled this when he said in verse 19, “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing.” Jesus was saying, “Once I know what God is doing, then I know what I need to be doing.” Jesus was not saying he was powerless to do anything. Nor are you powerless to set and accomplish goals. God has given you an intellectual mind and strong healthy body. He has given you passions and dreams and ambition to accomplish things with. Jesus was saying that he was powerless to accomplish anything of lasting value without the Father. If that was true for Jesus, how much more true is it for you and me? During his 33 years here on earth he never once tried anything without his Father. He never failed to do the will of God. He never sinned. How did he do this? By always asking the right question.

**Second,** be willing to wait for an answer. Once you accept Christ and decide to make yourself available to God, you must be willing to wait. Because to see God at work, we have to wait for God to reveal to us what he is doing. All through the Bible, we see people waiting until God revealed himself and his ways. Noah spent 120 years building an ark and waiting for the flood. Abraham waited 25 years for God to show him how he would be the father of many nations. Joshua waited 40 years in the desert until the unfaithful died off and God called him. And I have to warn you as you seek to join God in his work, you will have to wait a while too. Why? Paul answered that question when he wrote in Philippians 2:13, “For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.” Paul was saying that before he can show us what he is doing, he has to prepare us. We all enjoy seeing the first spring rains and the plants coming up and flowering. But an experienced farmer knows that too much rain on a new crop of small plants is not good. The reason it is not good for the young plants is because they don’t put down deep roots. Then when the summer comes, they can’t endure a week without rain. We all enjoy times when God rains down spiritual blessings on us. But the truth is that during those times we don’t really grow in depth spiritually. We tend to kick back and soak in the blessings and that is fine. God gives you those times. But God also knows you need spiritual droughts to put down deeper spiritual roots. And quite often he does that through making us wait on him. We have all been there: Times when you have wondered, “Where is God?” Do you find yourself in a period of waiting right now? I encourage you not to get restless and anxious. Even though you can’t see or sense it, God is working right now.

What do you do while you are waiting? Look at verse 20. “For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.” This describes a love relationship between the Father and the Son. While waiting, we need to build a relationship with God the Father. If you want to know what God is doing, you need to have a relationship with him. Not just any relationship, but a love relationship. One where you develop the same interests he has. One where you begin to think like God. That can only come from getting to know God in a very deep and personal way. How do you get into a relationship like that with God? By spending time with him. You can’t even begin to know what God is doing around you if you don’t know God. You can’t understand what God is doing around you if you don’t understand God. And knowing and understanding God comes from a relationship with him. The more time you spend with God, the better you know and understand him. The better you know and understand him, the deeper your relationship with him gets. The deeper your relationship with God, the more he reveals himself and his work to you.

**Third,** develop the attitude of a servant. Many passages in the Bible describe Jesus as God’s servant who came to do God’s will. Mark 10:45 says, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.” He calls us as his servants. The world’s concept of a servant is one who asks his master, “What do you want me to do?” And then the servant goes off, figures out how to do it and does whatever it is by himself. But that is not the biblical concept of a servant. If you want to be God’s servant, you can’t take your definition of a servant from the world. You must take your definition of a servant from the Bible. The biblical definition is one who sees what his master is doing and joins him in it. Many people have their own agenda and their own plan and they ask God to bless their plan. It is not serving God. It is serving their own desire. John 12:26 says, “Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.” In order to serve God, we have to watch where God is working around us, and join him in his work. It is critical that we develop the attitude of a servant so God can use us. If we do not have a servant attitude in us, why should God show us what he is doing?

**Fourth**, only God can do God-sized tasks. God wants to reveal himself to the world. The only way people will know what God is like is to see him at work in their world. Whenever God involves you in his activity, the assignment will be God-sized. They are always beyond what people could do in their own strength because he wants to demonstrate his nature, his strength, his provision, and his love to his people. God commanded Joshua to lead the Israelites across the Jordan River at flood stage. Joshua 4:24 says, “He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God.” However, when God calls you to join him in his work, we will always have a crisis of belief that requires faith and action because of God-sized tasks. In that crisis of belief, what we do reveals what we believe about God, regardless of what we say. What I believe about God will determine what I do and how I live. When God called Abram and promised to make him a father of many nations, Abram believed and God credited him as righteousness. However, his wife, Sarai, did not have the faith to believe that God could do the impossible and give her a child in her old age. Her belief about God was limited by her human reason. Thus, she gave Hagar to Abram to build a family through her. This act of unbelief was extremely costly. Ishmael caused Abram and Sarai much grief in their old age and even today. When God calls us to join him in his work, we need to make major adjustments in our life to join God. We cannot stay where we are and go with God. We need faith in God and overcome doubt. We may think, “Nothing is happening, I must have misunderstood God. Who am I that God would use me to accomplish his purposes and plans. I have struggled with too many problems in my life to be of use to God. I don’t speak well. I can’t teach. I am just an ordinary person. Who am I that I can make an eternal difference for God’s kingdom.” Many Christians miss what God is doing because of doubt. It is true that none of us can accomplish anything of lasting value on our own. But you are not doing it on your own. God shows you what he is doing not so that you can take it over, but so that you can join him. God wants you to be his business partner.

1 Corinthians 1:28 (NCV) says, “He chose what the world thinks is unimportant and what the world looks down on and thinks is nothing in order to destroy what the world thinks is important. God did this so that no one can brag in his presence.” When God shows you what he is doing, he is asking you to join him in the family business. And it is not because of all your education and talent and money and charisma. It is because you don’t have any of those things. God chooses the things this world labels as losers so he can confuse the world. He wants to turn the world’s thinking upside down! That way in the end people will look at you and say “No way! It had to be a God thing. Nothing else can explain it.” God uses the person this world looks down on. Why? So that we can’t say we did it and it reveals God to this lost and dying world. He is inviting the unloved, despised people of this world to join him in what he is doing. But to join him we have to believe that God can use the ordinary to do the extraordinary. Throw out all that self-doubt and what the world have told you about yourself. Believe that God can take ordinary you and make an eternal difference in this world and in his kingdom.

The most important work only God can do is salvation work. John 6:44 says, “No one can come to Jesus unless the Father draws him.” So people don’t seek God on their own initiative. They will not ask about spiritual matters unless God is working in their lives. So when we encounter someone who is seeking God or asking about spiritual matters, we are seeing God at work. Salvation work is God’s work. If we try to do what only God can do, we cannot do it, and then we get frustrated. In the past, I tried very hard to get students interested in the Bible study. We came up with all kinds of ideas during Clubs day. When students did not show any interests, I got very discouraged and fell into despair, thinking that God abandoned this campus. I realize now that I was trying to do God’s work by myself. I was trying to do what only God can do. How amazing it is that God wants us to be his business partners in his salvation work!

It is one of the deepest desires of our hearts as Christians to be used by God. But we so easily get caught up in the trivial day-to-day things of life and lose sight of the fact that we are God’s children and that he wants to include us in what he is doing in this world. We need to keep our focus on the right question: what is God’s will? We need to be patient while we wait for God’s answer, and ask God to change our hearts so that our number one desire will be to obey God and please him as his servant. Then God will use ordinary people like us to accomplish his extraordinary work in this world.

Big Idea: Have 20/20 vision to see where God is working and join him in his work