

As the Father, So the Son

Psalm 110:1-7, John 5:19-47 (ESV)

February 4, 2007

“As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.” “As the Father...gives...life, so also the Son gives life.” “As the Father, so...the Son.” Here is the most basic and important relationship set forth in the Gospel according to John, that in the Son we see the Father, that in the Son the Father himself is present, that in Jesus Christ we know God himself. “As the Father, so...the Son” This is the foundation of the gospel. It is on this relationship that all other good news depends. From this truth all salvation flows. On this affirmation rests the exclusivity of the gospel, eliminating all other claimants to divinity and all other contenders for the throne. By this knowledge all falsehood is defeated. “As the Father, so...the Son.” Thanks be to God!

This unity of the Father and the Son means that the great mysteries of the universe have been revealed. The one who created us has come to us as one of us. The one who sustains the world in existence has come to be with us. The one from whom we come and to whom we go has come to us in the mean time. The final judge of the universe and of all that is in it has made a preliminary appearance in the life and person of Jesus Christ. The Father, whose face we have not seen and whose voice we have not heard, has made himself visible to us in the life of Jesus Christ and has spoken his word to us in the word of Jesus Christ. That which is greater than we can imagine and more than we can comprehend has revealed himself to us in a way that we can understand in Jesus Christ. “As the Father, so...the Son.”

There are several aspects to this identity. For starters, “the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.” That is to say, the Son is not an independent agent. The Son does not act apart from God the Father. The Son does not veer away from the Father or in any way compete with the Father. In fact, Jesus says that the communication from the Father to the Son is thorough and complete. God in his heaven does not hide anything from Jesus on earth. “For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.” The changing of water into wine, the long distance healing of a boy who was ill, and the healing of the man who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years were just the beginning of the mighty works of God to be done in and through Jesus Christ. “As the Father, so...the Son.”

Many of these mighty works are set forth in the remainder of this gospel: feeding the five-thousand, walking on water, healing the blind, and even raising the dead. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and restored him to this life, that was an indicator of the even greater work of God to come in his raising of Jesus from the dead to eternal life, forever beyond the reach of death. And that first resurrection was also an indicator of the even greater work our resurrections which the Father would entrust to the Son. “For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.” The reason the Son can do this—the reason Jesus Christ can share his eternal life with us and promise his resurrection to us—is that the very power of God resides in Jesus Christ. “For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.” “As the Father, so...the Son.”

Another aspect of this identity is that the Son of God will also be the judge of universe at the end of time. In fact, the extent of this is as sweeping as the purpose is breathtaking. “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father.” This last expression begs the question of just how much they do honor the Father, and the immediate implication is that those who fail to do so will also dishonor Jesus Christ. We certainly see a great deal of that dishonoring throughout the world today. And surely what Jesus is saying here puts such disrespect in its eternal context. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians:

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
(Philippians 2:9-11 (ESV))

Some will be ecstatic, full of joy in the fulfillment of good hope. Some will be stunned, hardly comprehending what they had never believed. But all shall stand, and then all shall bow, before the judgment of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

It is at this point in today’s reading that Jesus takes everything that we think we know and stands it on its head. It is one thing for him to say, “The Father...has given all judgment to the Son, [in order] that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father.” That makes sense to us. It would seem that all good, God-fearing people should learn from their faith in God to reverence the Son of God. But that is not the way it works. Jesus turns this around and runs it in exactly the opposite direction: “Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent

him.” The honoring (or not) of the Son comes first. The honoring (or not) of the Father flows out of the first and comes only second.

That is to say, it is not the case that general faith in God comes first and that we learn somehow to specify that in Christ. It is instead the case that believing in Jesus Christ comes first and that through him we come to believe in God! No wonder the Jews wanted to kill him! Not only did Jesus make himself equal to God, but also he made it perfectly clear that he is the only access we have to God. This is an exclusive. All other paths necessarily lead to failure and thus lead to death. To come to the Son is to come to the Father. To fail to come to the Son is to fail to come to the Father. To worship the Son is to worship the Father. To refuse to acknowledge to the Son is to refuse to acknowledge to the Father. To love the Son as the Son is to love the Father. To reject the Son is surely and horribly to reject the Father. Lord, help us!

“Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.” The Father and the Son, though distinguishable, are joined inseparably to one another. Those who think they can reach and have God without the Son engage in baseless speculation. Those who think that Jesus is one voice among many fail to acknowledge or to comprehend the exclusivity of the relationship. There is no other! Those who think they can have and domesticate the Son as if he were not the Son, as if he had no Father, forfeit the best gift the Son has for us. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. More than a teacher, more than a prophet, more than a healer, more than a leader, more than a moral exemplar, Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Jesus Christ tells and shows us who God is and what God is about. In and through the birth, life, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in and through his teachings and signs, we learn who God is and what God’s will for us is. This is the meaning and significance of “As the Father, so...the Son.” And for this we give thanks to God.

How then shall we live? Let us live as those who have met the Son and in him have met the Father. Let us live as those who believe in the Son and in him believe in the Father. Let us live as those who love the Son and in him love the Father. How shall we do this? Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.” That is a done deal. Hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ and believing in God his Father is to have eternal life. So let us hear the gospel, chapter by chapter and verse by verse, read and preached right here every Sunday morning. Why should we be anywhere else? And hearing the gospel, let us believe in God the Father, who is eternally the Father of the Son, and let us believe in him precisely through his Son, who is eternally the Son of the Father.

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4

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To God be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

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