

## Sermon for November 17, 2024 – 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

John 5:25-29 EHV

Theme: **Don't worry about Judgement Day...**

- 1) Jesus calls you to spiritual life through the Gospel now,
- 2) To grant you everlasting life on Judgement Day.

<sup>25</sup>“Amen, Amen, I tell you: A time is coming and is here now when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who listen will live. <sup>26</sup>For just as the Father has life in himself, so also he has granted the Son to have life in himself. <sup>27</sup>And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.

<sup>28</sup>“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice <sup>29</sup>and will come out. Those who have done good will rise to live, but those who have practiced evil will rise to be condemned.

I hope I never have to appear as a defendant in a government courtroom. Can you imagine what that would be like? Even if all the evidence seemed to support your case, you could never be certain of your acquittal until the judge reads the verdict. Until that moment, you live in uncertainty.

We Christians know from the Bible that a day is coming when we will all stand before God for judgment. Are you confident that He will acquit you of sin on that day? Can anyone truly have that confidence? Some might think, “God should acquit me because I am generally a good person.” But consider how that reasoning would play out in a traffic court after receiving a speeding ticket: “Your honour, you need to let me go because I am usually not a bad speeder.” I wonder how the judge would respond. Regardless of how a human judge might react, God does not accept such reasoning because He doesn't just command us to be “generally” good. He commands us to be perfect. Because that is the case, can anyone hope to escape God's judgement?

Brothers and sisters in Christ, Jesus assures us that we can approach Judgment Day with confidence. As He explains in our sermon text, we can be certain of our acquittal—not because of anything we have done, but because of who Jesus is and what He has done for us. Let us reflect on these truths under the theme: **Don't worry about Judgement Day...** 1) Jesus calls you to spiritual life through the Gospel now, 2) to grant you everlasting life on Judgement Day.

Part One: Jesus calls you to spiritual life through the Gospel now.

Before we dive into the comforting message of our sermon text, let's first reflect on the situation that led Jesus to speak it. On a certain Sabbath, Jesus healed a man who had been crippled for 38

years. The Pharisees condemned Jesus as a false teacher and persecuted Him for healing the man on a day when God forbade all work.

Jesus asserted that just as God the Father is always working, so must He, for He and the Father are one. He then went on to say that the Father granted the Son authority to do everything the Father does. He even granted him the authority to judge and create life itself. He explains:

<sup>25</sup>“*Amen, Amen, I tell you: A time is coming and is here now when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who listen will live.*”

As God’s Son, Jesus possesses the power to raise the physically dead. He demonstrated this power during his ministry by raising Lazarus, Jairus’s daughter, and the son of a widow from Nain. But even more impressive than raising the physically dead is His ability to raise the spiritually dead: those who have separated themselves from God through sin. And do you know who fits that description? You and I, as the Bible states: *You were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked when you followed the ways of this present world... Formerly, we all lived among them in the passions of our sinful flesh, as we carried out the desires of the sinful flesh and its thoughts. Like all the others, we were by nature objects of God's wrath.*<sup>i</sup>

Do you get the point? Outside of Christ, everyone on this earth is spiritually dead — separated from God because of sin and deserving of everlasting punishment in hell. And unless God Himself raises a person to repent and know Him, it cannot happen. Why? Because our sinful nature harbours hostility toward the true God. It is terrified of His holiness and hates Him for it. Our sinful flesh refuses to accept that its desires are sinful and resists admitting it deserves condemnation.

But God the Father did not want us to remain separated from Him in spiritual death forever. That is why He sent His Son to take on human flesh and blood - entrusting Jesus with all authority to carry out our salvation, including the power to raise the spiritually dead, as Jesus said: <sup>25</sup>“*Amen, Amen, I tell you: A time is coming and is here now when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who listen will live.*”

So, how does Jesus give life to the spiritually dead? The same way he gave life to the physically dead: by the power of His Word. When Jesus said to Jairus’ daughter, “Little girl, get up,” the little girl got up. When Jesus commanded: “Lazarus come out,” Lazarus came out of his tomb. My point is this: when Jesus speaks, stuff happens. Therefore, when Jesus says to the sin-deadened heart, “Repent and believe in me for the forgiveness of sins,” the power of Christ’s almighty Word awakens that spiritually dead person to life. How? First, God’s law leads him to recognize his sin and the punishment he deserves for breaking God’s law. Then Jesus uses His Gospel to show how He lived in perfect obedience to God’s law, died to pay for all our sins, and rose from the grave to

prove that we are reconciled to God. Whoever believes this truth and applies it to himself is reunited with God. He has crossed over from spiritual death to spiritual life.

Yes, *God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*<sup>ii</sup> That simple Gospel truth is the means Jesus uses to resurrect unbelievers to faith. And the beautiful thing about this Gospel is that no matter who speaks it, Jesus' voice resonates through it. Why? Because it is His Word that raises the spiritually dead to spiritual life.

How can Jesus' words possess such power? He explains: *<sup>26</sup>For just as the Father has life in himself, so also he has granted the Son to have life in himself.*

No living being can come to life on its own. All are dependent on God, the source of life for every creature. And Jesus? According to his human nature, Jesus is as dependent on God the Father as we are. But Jesus is not just a mere human; He is also God the Son. Therefore, like God the Father, Jesus has life in himself and can create life out of nothing.

This divine authority empowered Jesus to rise from the grave after his crucifixion – thereby declaring all sins paid for in full. More than that, this divine authority allows Jesus to create spiritual life in the cold, dead hearts of those who hear His word - awakening them to repent and trust in Him as their Saviour from sin.

Dear Christian, through the preaching of His Gospel, Jesus has raised you from spiritual death and doubt to spiritual life and faith. Already now, He judges you as forgiven and reconciled with God. With that promise, you can live your earthly life in peace, unafraid of God's coming judgment.

Part Two: To grant you everlasting life on Judgement Day.

*<sup>26</sup>For just as the Father has life in himself, so also he has granted the Son to have life in himself.*

*<sup>27</sup>And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.*

God the Father has not only given Jesus the authority to raise believers to spiritual life but also to judge all creation on the Last Day. The Pharisees, however, refused to accept this. How could Jesus, the human who stood before them, have the power to forgive sin? How could he be the Son of Man, described by the prophet Daniel, who would judge the world?

Responding to their doubts, Jesus said: *<sup>28</sup>“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice <sup>29</sup>and will come out.*

“Don’t be amazed at this.” In other words, don’t sinfully doubt how all this is possible. Jesus’ life and teachings fulfilled every Old Testament prophecy regarding the Messiah. The time is coming when He will powerfully prove what He claimed and will raise all the dead for judgment.

*Those who have done good will rise to live, but those who have practiced evil will rise to be condemned.*

What does Jesus mean when he says, "Those who have done good will rise to live"? I mean, my neighbours who don’t believe in Jesus seem like good people. Some volunteer and give far more to charity than I do. Does that mean they will all be welcomed into heaven? Not if they don’t turn to Jesus in repentance and faith.

You see, God does not define goodness merely as benefiting others. No, for a work to be “good” in God’s eyes, it must be done out of faith and love for Him, as the Bible states: *without faith it is impossible to please God.*<sup>iii</sup> Therefore, the “good” God looks to is not our deeds, but our hearts, as Jesus said on another occasion: *“This is the work of God: that you believe in the one he sent... Amen, Amen, I tell you: The one who believes in me has eternal life.”*<sup>iv</sup>

Oh, how blessed are we Christians when we repent of our sins and trust in Christ alone for forgiveness! In the verse right before our sermon text, Jesus declared: *Amen, Amen, I tell you: Anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He is not going to come into judgment but has crossed over from death to life.*<sup>v</sup>

But that invites the question: how does simple faith in Jesus’ promise of salvation save us from falling under God’s condemnation? It’s because God credits our faith in Jesus as righteousness.<sup>vi</sup>

Think of it this way: if a billionaire provided you with cheques to pay all your creditors, using those cheques would release you from debt. Similarly, Jesus paid for our sins in full. Faith takes hold of that payment and says to God the Father, “Lord, I cannot pay my debt, but your Son, Jesus, has paid for it all in full. His resurrection proves it. He told me that you would credit his life and death to my account to release me from my debt of the good I owe you, so please do as both you and he promised.” And God is faithful to His Word: he credits Jesus’ righteousness to your account and frees you from any obligation to pay for your sins.

What a blessing! Jesus ensures that we never have to fear Judgment Day. He paid for our sins completely and raised us to spiritual life by creating faith within us through the Gospel. This empowers us to live to his glory. It moves us to do the good he wants us to do: loving others as he loved us by sharing the Gospel with them and using the physical resources He gives us to address

their bodily needs. Moreover, we can fearlessly look forward to the Last Day, confident that God will raise our bodies to live in the everlasting paradise he has prepared for us.

What a grand reunion that day will be for believers in Christ! The mother who lost her child through a miscarriage will finally get to meet him. The daughter, who never met her father because he died young, will finally see him. And most glorious of all, we humans, who had separated ourselves from God through sin, will see him face to face and live with him under his loving reign forever. We will shine like the stars forever as one big, united family. No division or sin will ever separate us. No pain or evil will ever befall us. We will just experience joy with our loving, all-powerful God forever.

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, rejoice because **you don't need to worry about Judgement Day**. Jesus calls you to spiritual life through the Gospel now to grant you everlasting life when He comes again on the Last Day. Therefore, keep on clinging to Christ in faith, praising the LORD for His amazing grace. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Cf. Ephesians 2:1-3 EHV

<sup>ii</sup> John 3:16 EHV

<sup>iii</sup> Hebrews 11:6 EHV

<sup>iv</sup> John 6:29,47 EHV

<sup>v</sup> John 5:24 EHV

<sup>vi</sup> Cf. Romans 4:3,23-25.