

John 5:19-29

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[0 : 00] If you've got a Bible, turn to John 5. John 5, it's page 890. I hate board games.

It's a great grief to me that in this church there are people that like knights of board games. I just don't get it. If you want me to come to your house and you have board games, I'm not coming. I've just never liked them. Conquering a new world, or escaping to a new island, or monopolising the London property market, it's excruciating.

And one of many reasons why I don't like them. But sometimes playing a board game can be three hours of waiting for the inevitable, can't it?

Simply because the board was set in a certain way. Right from the start, there's an underlying reality and you've got to go through the rest of the night playing the board game. There's someone who on the first round or the second round landed on Mayfair and Park Lane.

[1 : 15] Or they got all of Catan's resources. And so there's an underlying structure to the game. Before you even begin, it's going to shape every moment of the game.

Right from the start. Every moment will be shaped by an underlying reality. And when you come to John 5, John 5 gives to us the underlying structure of all reality.

It takes you as far back as you can go and it gives you the underlying structure, the underlying reality. It takes you and I into the mystery of who God is.

Of the Trinity. And as we confess in the Athanasian Creed and as we look in John 5, we'll see that it stretches our hearts and minds to breaking point.

And so from Augustine to Calvin to Carson, minds and hearts have been stretched. We're grappling this morning. What makes God the Father the Father?

[2 : 24] What makes God the Son the Son? Nowhere does in the Bible do we tiptoe closer to the fact that Jesus is begotten before all time.

He never had a beginning. Before all worlds, says John. And yet he doesn't tell you just interesting things about Jesus.

He tells us this this morning because God wants to offer you Jesus. To each one of us. Jesus has just done and said, doesn't he, something hugely provocative.

We saw it last week. By his sheer sovereign grace, he takes one invalid man out of a whole tragic mass of people. A man who actually wasn't very interested in him.

A man whose entire lifetime has been spent in despair. And miraculously Jesus gives him his life back. His physical life at least. And when Jesus did that, he did it on the Jewish Sabbath.

[3 : 25] And the authorities, they are furious that he did it. And he points out, doesn't he, if you look at verse 17 of John chapter 5, that God is working and so he is working.

God is working to give and sustain life every moment of every day. And what God the Father does, he does also. And the implication is Jesus saying, I am God the Son.

I am God's absolute equal. That claim to be equal with God in verse 18 ultimately cost him his life. If Jesus had not offered evidence, I would want to say and you would want to say that a human being claiming to be God's equal, they should be led away, shouldn't they, to some secure institution in the care of a firm but friendly nurse.

But here, do you notice, even the enemies of Jesus, they don't dispute the evidence. They've all seen the evidence and the evidence is what they're so angry about.

Jesus has worked a miracle in front of them that is very God-like. And he's been making God-like judgment claims with a God-like authority. Which puts their rejection of him on far more shaky ground, doesn't it?

[4 : 40] And yet in his kindness, Jesus just doesn't drop a truth bomb on them and turn his back. This astonishing claim that he is God-made flesh, Yahweh incarnate.

It goes against everything the people around him thought that they knew about the one and only God. And everything that Jesus says to us today is about allowing these people around him, who are seething with anger, scheming his death, to climb down from their high horse. And to receive him. What one thing is true today that was true before all worlds and before all time, Jesus tells us in verse 20, the great underlying reality of our world. There is a Father who exists in eternal, loving communion with his Son. There is a Father who shares everything with his Son. His whole undivided being, all that he wills, all that he does. That is the ultimate underlying structure of reality. A communion of love. A God of love.

[5 : 54] Later, John will flesh it out more. He will tell us of the Spirit in this relationship of love. But we've got little brains, haven't we? And for now, it is the Son that people want to destroy. And so that is the basic structure, the underlying reality at the heart of everything. A Father and a Son perfectly at one. And that should shape all our experience of life in God's creation. Jesus makes three headline statements. Each begins with truly, truly. That expression that Jesus likes to use when eternity hangs in the balance. And it is the central truly, truly statement which tells us what all this means for us. This is the reason for the sermon. Look at verse 24. Truly, truly, I say to you, Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. If reality is the way it is, If underlying everything else is this Trinitarian God of love, Then as we share in God's life and joy through the Son, He is speaking to us.

[7 : 09] The voice of the Father is the Son. And God is speaking that voice, Holding out His Son right now. Because He wants to draw you and I into this ultimate reality, This fellowship, This communion.

To get us out of the tragic states that we've fallen into, Of sin and despair. And death. To bring you and I into the warmth and life That is at the heart of everything. And so there are deep truths in this passage, aren't there, That stretch our minds. Over what kind of Son He is. But we wrestle with these truths, Because in these truths are joy and life and ultimate reality. So that we should finish today honouring Jesus, Listening to Jesus, And marvelling at Jesus. Those are the three points. First of all, verses 19 to 23, Listen, honour Jesus. Honour Jesus, Because of all that He is, And all that He does. The Father has loved, From eternity past.

[8 : 23] And the key here, I think, Is not to lose sight of the amazing thing that's just happened. Do you remember? It's really dense, isn't it, the paragraph. It's really rich. But it's not an abstract discussion, About the work of the Son. It flows from what Jesus has just done, To that invalid man. He's healed that man, Who's severely disabled. And they've seen this amazing work of love from Jesus. But verse 23, They have not honoured Him for that. In fact, quite the opposite. They've not honoured the Son. They've attacked, And they've criticised, And dishonoured the Son that God loves. And Jesus says, You're actually dishonouring God Himself. The God that they think that they're defending. Which is why He says in verse 19, It starts with a sow. They are outraged, That Jesus has put His work on the same level, As God the Father. In their eyes, It makes Jesus some kind of rival deity.

[9 : 28] Another God. But that's not what Jesus' kind of equality, That He's talking about. Look at verse 19, He says, The Son can do nothing of His own accord. Literally, He can do nothing from Himself. As if He were some autonomous rival. There's a fromness to God the Son. And here, let's think about this. This doesn't just apply to Jesus the God-man. It stretches right back into eternity, Before creation. And we'll see more of that later, But there's some sense in which, His person, His Son-ness, It comes from God the Father. We don't have three gods. We confess that, do we? We have the Trinity, A tri-unity. The Father and the Son, They share one perfect, Harmonious will. It belongs to their one perfectly shared being.

[10:36] So the Son, Can do only what He sees the Father doing. God the Son does nothing more, Than what the Father does. Verse 19 and 20.

God the Son does nothing less, Than what the Father does. For whatever the Father does, The Son does likewise. And then you've got these chain of verses, That begin for, Explaining what He said, And giving us examples.

And verse 20, Is the explanation, The grounds of it all. At the heart of reality, For the Father loves the Son. You cannot pull them apart, And the Father shows the Son, All that He is doing.

And so we're two verses in, Aren't we? And we're in water, Already above, Over our heads. Human language, And the human brain, It's so hard to say more.

And maybe we hear this, We hear Jesus speaking, And we imagine it like, A dad and his boy, Doing DIY together. And the Father shows, How it's done first, And then the Son copies him, Like an apprentice.

[11:49] Two separate deeds, That are very similar. But we know it can't be like that. Because John has already told us, Right at the start of the Gospel, He says, Without the Word, Without the Son, There was nothing made, That was made.

There is nothing the Father did, Or made, Before the Son was involved. Verse 19, Let's just push that even further, Look at verse 19.

Without Him, Was not anything done, That was done. Without the Son, Not anything was said, That was said.

Whatever the Father does, He does through His beloved Son. And so Jesus is using words here, Isn't He? Like seeing, And showing, To describe, An eternal reality, In God's being.

That there is, A continual, Love, Loving communion, A continual loving fellowship, Between Father and Son. Where the Father shares, Everything He is and has, His whole being with the Son.

[13:07] Including one, Undivided will. And it's that direction, Of sharing, Which makes the Father, The Father and the Son, The Son. The Son is eternally, Begotten.

The Father shares, His Godness. His being, With Him eternally. And from that, Ordering of relationship, With Himself in eternity, There flows, Out from that, Ordering in God's actions. He works, Outside Himself, In time. Everything God does, Including the healing, Of that one desperate man, Sitting by the pool. Everything that God does, That Jesus does, Is appointed by the Father, And is accomplished by the Son.

Illustrations, Are nearly impossible on this, But Augustine, The kind of great, Saint Augustine, Compares it to the way, That we write. And so you think about, The way you write.

First of all, You've got to form the letters, And word, In your heart and head. And then you have to, Write them with your hand. But it's the same letter, Isn't it?

[14:19] It's the same letter, That the heart and the hand, Are working. There's one whole work. And so when Jesus, Does this extraordinary work, Of love in the Gospels, You are seeing, As Jesus heals that invalid man, The love of the Father.

In fact you're seeing, The eternal love, Of Father, Son and Spirit, Spilling out, Bursting through time. It means, For you and I, That everything that Jesus does, Is Father like.

There is nothing, In his claim, To be in equal with God, That those, Monotheistic Jews, Listening to Jesus, Need to worry about. Jesus is showing them, The Father.

He is showing them, The Father's loving works. And it means for us, That the Father, Is completely Jesus like. There's nothing in God, The Father, There is nothing in the God, Of the Old Testament, That we should ever be ashamed of.

Not his views on marriage, Not his views on judgment, Or any of the things, That we might find, Worrying or embarrassing. Because if we want to know, Who he is, If we want to know, Who God is, We only need to look, At what Jesus does.

[15:36] Even the cross, At the end of this book of John, Is the Father's work of love, Spilling out onto the page. It's the biggest window, Into the Father's heart, That ever has been, Or ever will be.

And that's what he's like. And so according to, At the end of verse 20, That one little work of love, That all witnessed, Witnessed by the poor, That is a foretaste.

That is a sign, Of two great works in particular, That the Father will do through his son. So verse 21, That one miracle, Is a sign that God gives life, Isn't it?

He gives life to whoever he will, And second in verse 22, That second sign, That God the son, Will judge all the earth. Don Carson quotes, A Jewish, Rabbi writing in the Talmud, And he's

suggesting, That God holds three, Keys in his hand, That God will never entrust, To anyone else. First key is the key of raid, The key of the womb, And the key of the resurrection, Of the dead. Certain powers, That only belong to God.

[16:53] Divine prerogatives. And there's none more so, Than the power to give life, And to judge eternal souls. And that is placed, By God the father, Into the hands of God the son.

All because he loves him, With an eternal love. And in verse 23, He loves him, So much, That his ultimate purpose, In everything, Is for you and I, To recognise, And honour, His son Jesus, For whom he is.

That he is God of God, Equal in power, And glory. And so to look, To look on Jesus, Works of love, And the amazing things, That Jesus does, In his world, To look on those, And reject them, Is to reject God the father, And his work, And his love, Even the people, Sitting there that day, Rejecting him, In the name of monotheism, People might claim, To worship the God of Abraham, Many do today, But they don't adore, The Lord Jesus Christ, And if we don't adore, The Lord Jesus, We dishonour him, We are worshipping, A different God, And so honour Jesus, Because the father, Loves him eternally, Secondly, Verses 24 to 27, Listen to Jesus, Because through his voice, The father is speaking,

Life today, It's one of the famous, Strange things that happens, Isn't it, When someone dies, How people speak about it, They don't say to you, They don't say, Well I'm sorry to hear, That your father died, Do they?

They say something like this, They say, I'm sorry to hear, That your dad has, Has passed, You heard that? As if, That person took, A kind of mortality exam, And got good grades, Or as if he was, Taking a nap, We know don't we, It's hard to talk about, Death, But the next time, If you're a Christian, I hear you say, I'm sorry to hear, That so and so has passed, I want to correct you, Alright, Because look at verse 22, If you are sitting, Here this morning, And you are a follower, Of the Lord Jesus Christ, Can you see, You have passed, You have passed, From death to life, Some of you will know, The exact time and date, Of when you passed, Some of you might be, The 1984, Billy Graham crusade, Or something like that, Or it was a CU mission meeting, In wherever you went, Or a camp, Others of you sitting here, You never knew a time,

[19:52] When, When, You didn't love the Lord Jesus, Wonderfully, Either way, It's an astonishing claim, That Jesus makes, Isn't it, Look at, In verse 22, Whoever hears my word, And believes him, Who sent me, Has passed, Already done, They've passed, From death to life, We were dead, But the moment Jesus, Spoke to us, We heard, And came to life, So the question is, How?

Up in verse 21, He says, That the father, Raises the dead, It was his prerogative, But in the same way, The son gives life, To whom ever he will, One, Single, Perfect, Harmonious will, And so what do we see here, Verse 25, It is the son, Whose words people hear, But it is the father, Who people believe, When they hear them, And so receive life, To put it another way, God, Is spirit, Speaking Jesus, Into the world, And he's doing it right now, Look at verse 25, Truly, Truly, I say to you, An hour, Is coming, And is now here, Right now, When the dead, Will hear the voice, Of the son of God, And those who hear, Will live, Right now,

Right at this moment, Jesus is, God is speaking, Giving Jesus, To dead people, It's happening, In this, Very room, People are, Passing away, Backwards, From death, To life, That's an astonishing, Thing to believe, Clearly, This isn't, Kind of dead, Dead people, If I can put it like that, We'll come to them in a moment, I've never seen, One of them, Kind of stand up, Off the mortuary table, And come to life, No, These are the living, Dead people, There are people like you and I, This great, Lost, Horde of humanity, Lying in our spiritual graves, Cut off from God, Estranged from that reality, Of love, And light, And life, At the heart of the universe, But God the Father, Has come into this world, And he has broken, Into those rebellious lives, And ever and present, When he speaks these words, They've just seen a little picture, Haven't they?

They've just seen a forties, Of what it means, For the dead to come to life, They've seen an apathetic, Unbelieving man, With nothing going for him, Restored miraculously to health, And that is a sign, That points to a greater reality, Of what Jesus has come to do, The hour has now come, When the dead hear his voice, And if you are somebody, Who is trusting the Lord Jesus, This morning, And loving the Lord Jesus, You are a resurrected person, Is there more to come?

Yeah, definitely, For soon, We'll get to that, But as much as we're afraid, In churches like this, Of overplaying, What it means to be, A believer in this age, There's also a danger, That we underplay it, Jesus' miracles were signs, Jesus gives, Resurrection life, He has broken, Into this age, And if

you are, A Christian believer, He has given that life, To you, And you will always have it, He's given it, To you already, You were spiritually dead, You were unresponsive, There was a flat line, On the heart monitor, The doctors had called it, There was nothing, That could be done for you, Nothing you could do to yourself, To welcome God, Into your heart, But in Jesus' love, The life of the age to come, Has broken in, And our bodies have got, Some catching up to do, Haven't they?

[24 : 08] The last four, Comes in verse 26, It tells us how he did it, For as the father, Has life in himself, So he's granted the son, To have life in himself, God has life, In an entirely different way, Than you and I do, God's life, Is his, All of his own, He is self-sufficient, Self-sustaining, Never depleting life, And your life, Is not like that, Neither is mine, Our lives, Our lives are like the lights, On a Christmas tree, You unplug, You unplug the Christmas lights, From the tree, And for a split second, The lights keep glowing, Don't they?

But inevitably, The light dies, Because those Christmas lights, They don't have light, Life in themselves, They are dependent, And just as our lives, Are dependent, And so God warned humanity, Right at the start, He warned mankind, That he had made, That the day that you turn your back on him, You would surely die, The plague would be pulled, You'd be cast out, From his presence, And yes, As human beings, We still glow for a while, But that moment, We are born, We begin to fade, We are spiritually dead, According to the Bible, But just as God the Father, Has life in himself, So he has granted, That the Son, The Lord Jesus, Would have life in himself, It's that same, Wonderful mystery, That we try to creep up to, In verse 20, God the Father, Shares his whole, Undivided Godness,

With God the Son, He is God of God, And as God the Son, He has all that the Father has, It is all his, Own self-sufficient, Unending life, Eternally his, And here is the mystery, Here is the mystery, That as the Son, That Godness, That undepleting life, Is something granted to him, Begotten to him by the Father, And so Jesus comes to us, This morning, And he comes to us, With life, Unlike any other life, In creation, It's his own to give, He's been granted, Judgment over all things, Verse 27, Even over death and life, And so when we were cut off, When the plague, Had been pulled out, When we'd been estranged, From the source of life, Unforgiven, Coming into judgment, But verse 24, Jesus is the great reconciler, He is the source,

Of life itself, And right now, His voice is ringing out, And we get to look, At his works, As these people have done, And his Father's love, Is on show for us, And we listen to his words, As we are right now, In this room, Calling us back to himself, Calling us to take hold, Of his Son, And be made right with him, It's why as Christians, Isn't it, We long for our family, And for our friends, And our neighbours, And people we care about, To come to church, To sit and be under Jesus' words, To hear Jesus' words, Because that voice, Is life-giving, Unto us, Listen to Jesus, And then finally, Verses 28 to 29, Marvel at Jesus, Marvel at Jesus, Because he will pass, The Father's verdict, Now if you're still awake,

And you look down, At verse 28, It seems to be saying, The exact opposite, Of what my point is saying, Isn't it, Can you see that, It says there, Do not marvel, And yet my point is, Marvel, Marvel, And so, If you look at verse 20, God the Father, Wants us to look at, Jesus' works, That he will do through his son, And he wants you, To marvel at Jesus, And so the question is, Why in verse 28, What is the this, In verse 28, And I think again, You need to come out of the weeds, And remind yourself, Of where this paragraph comes, The people that Jesus, Is speaking to, They are angry, They are angry, About one man, Who was healed on the Sabbath, With nothing but a word, They've seen one little picture, Of what he's been saying, In these verses, That his voice, Gives life to the living dead, And they're astonished, And they are furious with him,

[28 : 57] And do you see, What he's saying in verse 28, He is saying to them, You've not seen anything yet, Let me give you something, To marvel at, That voice, Which healed, One spiritually dead, Man, Will ring out, Over all the earth, And it will call, Every man, And woman, And child, Whoever was, Or is to come, Because the hour is now, Verse 25, When the living dead, Can you hear my voice?

But verse 28, There's an hour still coming, When even the dead, Dead will hear my voice, That same voice, Not just one representative man, But all who are in their tombs, Will rise out of the grave, To face their life giver, And their judge, And on that day, He says, Jesus, What you did with my voice, Will be perfectly obvious, And it will be all out in the open, So take hold of me, While you've got the chance, While you're alive, And if my new creation life, Has been planted in you, Then it will be demonstrable, On that last day, It won't be just a fantasy, That you lived, There will

be evidence, To base the judgment on, Good works, As Jesus put it, In chapter 3, That were carried out,

In God, Through his grace, Fruits of a life, That have been changed, By the son of God, But those who rejected my voice, Those who heard the love, Of heaven speaking, And saw that all I did, And yet they dishonoured the son, There will be nothing to show, On that day, Because in life, They never passed, From condemnation, To communion with God, So in death, They will rise, To the resurrection, Of judgment, And they will answer, For their deeds, And every last human being, From global, To your granny, Will rise, From their grave, Or their scattered cloud, Of ashes, And they will stand, Before the Lord Jesus, With joy, Or with tears, In their eyes, And then we will marvel, As well we should, You see it's really important, Isn't it, For you and I to know, Whose hands we are in, You live like that, Even for something, As trivial as a haircut, You care about, Who's going to be doing it, Don't you, For some of us, That's more applicable, Than others, But you care about, Who's going to do your haircut, You go for surgery, And who the surgeon is, Really matters, It really matters, Doesn't it, And Jesus, Jesus has told us here, Whose hands, Have been entrusted, By God the Father, With the resurrection, Of our bodies, And the eternal judgment, Of our souls, He's showing us, The reality, That every single priority, Of our lives, Surely has to be ordered round, And it could not be, Better news, It's the one, Who does whatever, The Father does, And the voice, Of life, And love, That God, In his kindness, Is still speaking, Into the world today, And so then, It is time for us, To listen isn't it, Time for us, To grab hold, Of that voice, Let's pray together, Let's pray together,