

The Two Ways

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[0 : 00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 9th of March 2003.

The preacher is Paul Dudley. His sermon is entitled The Two Ways and is based on John chapter 5 verses 18 to 29.

What is it that you live for? I did a video a few years ago asking people this question. What is it that they live for?

What were the things that made them live? What were they keen to do? So I put them down on this video. Just some friends.

Job. I don't really want that much money. Just, you know, be happy. Just to achieve happiness and peace of mind once I finish working, once I've retired.

[1 : 28] Just to know that I have actually achieved something and made a difference, no matter how rich or how poor I am. Just as long as I feel I've made a difference. I want to have a loving wife and a nice family.

I guess I want to travel the world, see lots of different places and countries and just be happy about what I do, get a good job, get a bit of money, yeah, raise a family in the future, not until I'm a bit older though.

My ultimate goal in life will be to, you know, like really enjoy myself, I think. None of this, like, stressed out crap.

I want to have a good time. I want satisfaction. In what? Well, in whatever thing I think I can achieve, for instance, education, work and family, these are the three things which I look forward to.

Probably just a good career and something that I'm happy with. To secure the future for my kids because I'm married and I've got three kids, yeah? Not that much, actually.

[2 : 41] I don't know, I want to get married, I want to pay off. You made an impact on some people, you know? Some people said, wow, the world was a better place for you being there. That's right.

Just to get my three-and-a-half-year-old son to sleep in his own bed all night, that's my big ambition in life. Nice house. Cool, nice car. Five, two boys.

And a fine wife. That's great. I can achieve, continue to achieve, to grow the business and hopefully keep happy personally.

I think generally what I want to achieve is a fairly constant stay of happiness. Stay of happiness. Anything? Like, what I expect out of life is that I don't die. I mean, I die, but that some people remember me when I'm dead.

Basically, this is my ideal, is travel around the world and write books and take pictures. Health, happiness, a good family life, a marriage, a couple of kids, financial security.

[3 : 40] I suppose what most people want. Simple as that. Interesting. Some of the different things that we live for.

The Bible tells us that although a lot of these things are good and can be quite healthy, the Bible tells us ultimately there are two ways to live. We've been looking at this, through this sermon series, and we've been looking at this man, Jesus.

And he's been central to most of what we've been speaking about. On a bus, a man got on.

He sat at the back, he had a beanie on, and he had a tracksuit. And he sat at the back of the bus. Well, three teenagers got on. They came up to him and they decided they'd give him a bit of a hard time.

So they mocked him a little. Well, soon they gave him a bit more of a harder time. They thought, he's not reacting here. This is fair game here. We can get him pretty good. So they abused him to his face.

[4 : 50] And they kept on giving him a hard time. Well, the man came to his bus stop after being abused for some time and got up.

But as he was about to get off, he handed a card, his business card, to the three U's that were giving him a hard time. And the business card said, Joe Lewis, professional boxer.

He was the three time, sorry, the seven time world champion boxer. He was one of the great ones.

He was lucky for them that when he, he obviously woke up in the morning feeling pretty good because he could have absolutely pummeled them. Absolutely pummeled them.

You see, the three U's didn't realise that they were in the presence of greatness. Absolute greatness of this guy. Seven times world champion.

[5 : 54] He's one of the great ones. But they treated him as though he was a no one. How is it that you treat Jesus? How is it that we treat him?

Through our sermon series, we've been looking at the fact that Jesus is central, as I said, to everything. We saw in the first talk that God is the creator of the world.

That he put man in charge to rule underneath him, to sit underneath his rule. The second talk, we saw the fact that man rejected God's rule. We decided that we wanted to be God.

We decided we want to live the way that we wanted to live. And his rejection, we saw, is called sin. The third talk, we saw that God takes this sin very seriously. The Bible tells us that the punishment for this sin is death.

We saw that week the punishment of hell. We also saw God's solution in Jesus on the cross.

[7 : 02] We saw the fact that once Jesus died, he also rose again so that we can have life with him. But notice, through all these, the centrality of Jesus.

For we saw in the first talk that in Colossians all things were created in him and through him for him, for Jesus. We saw the fall and the judgment being answered in the cross where Jesus became sin for us.

We saw in the fact that when Jesus rose again, we have life with him. We are in the presence of greatness, true greatness. Here is our great saviour.

But not all accept Jesus as great. Not all live for him. Not all accept Jesus as he is presented in the scriptures.

In tonight's passage, you might like to have open on page 866. Just before our passage that we heard read tonight, Jesus has just healed a man who was sitting beside a well, beside a pool.

[8 : 16] But he healed him on a Sabbath. The Jews were absolutely irate about this. The fact that Jesus worked on a Sabbath. Well, we see there in verse 18, sorry, verse 17, Jesus said, my father is still working and I also am working.

Jesus claims, Jesus makes this extraordinary claim that Jesus is his father. Well, the Jews picked up on this very quickly. For this reason, the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him because he was not only breaking the Sabbath, but he was also calling God his own father, thereby making himself equal to God.

He was a Jew who recognised what Jesus was saying. Jesus was claiming equality. He was claiming that Jesus in a very special sense, God, the father, was in a very special sense his father.

If he would have said that God was the father of us all, that would have been okay. But Jesus was claiming that God was his father in a very special way.

And for them, this was blasphemy. And it led to them trying to kill him. Well, the passage follows straight on from that little cameo that we just saw then.

[9 : 36] We see Jesus then giving a bit of a discussion on his relationship with the father. The first thing we see there in verse 19 is that Jesus is dependent on the father.

Let me read it for you. Jesus said to them, Very truly I tell you, the son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees his father doing.

For whatever else the father does, the son does likewise. I have two gorgeous kids. What is funny to notice at times is that they copy us.

They say things like we say them. They do things just like we do them. and it's just kind of freaky. You know, like, goodness me.

I guess what's even freakier is when I think about me and my father. Some of the things that I vowed I would never be like my father, I find in myself at times. My father only called me up last night telling me that he was going to do the children's talk this morning at his church that he was in, but that he hadn't decided what he was going to do and that he would probably work it out in the morning before he gave the talk.

[10 : 44] For those who know me, well, perhaps there are some similarities there. It's interesting how we copy our fathers or our mothers.

Well, here we see Jesus copying his father perfectly. What he sees his father doing, he does. He reflects on his father continually. He does whatever he does.

This brings about a few implications. The first thing is, is the son is dependent on the father. The son cannot act independent apart from his father's will.

He does what the father does. He's completely obedient to the father. Another word for this is that he is subordinate to the father.

Now, subordination is a bit of a dirty word. We don't like the idea of subordination. But here we see it in the scriptures. Here we see the father, see Jesus, submitting himself to the father's will, doing what the father has to say, doing what the father does.

[11 : 56] He submits himself, obeys him completely. We don't see it in an unhealthy way. But as we look at this here, it doesn't make Jesus any inferior.

You see, the reason why Jesus is able to imitate his father, the reason why Jesus is able to do what his father does is because they are of the same divine nature.

They are of the same nature. They are equal. He is able to do exactly what the father does because he is of the same divine nature as the father. Well, in verse 20, he goes on to explain why he is able to do whatever the father does.

We see there in verse 20, it is because the father loves the son. The father loves the son and shows him all that he himself is doing. He will show him greater works than these so that you will be astonished.

The reason why the son is able to do what the father does is because the father loves him. The father never ceases to love the son. He's always giving.

[13 : 10] He's not withholding. The father loves the son. It is a relationship not of a slave to master or an employer to employee but a relationship of a father to a son who are united in love.

The father reveals to his son what the son is to do. As we saw in the latter part of the verse though, the father will show even greater works than these, the things that Jesus has been doing.

Two things that are picked up, the fact that the son is able to give life to the dead and also able to pronounce final judgment. Verse 21 picks up this first part, the fact that Jesus is able to give life.

Indeed, just as the father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the son gives life to whomever he wishes. As we read through the Bible, we see there that God is the one who gives life.

In 2 Kings chapter 5, the king of Israel says, am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? That is God's role, to bring back to life.

[14 : 24] He is the one who gives life. In Deuteronomy chapter 32, it says, there is no God besides me. I kill and I make alive. I wound and I heal. In Ezekiel chapter 37, we have this great picture where all these lifeless bones come back to life again.

The key to this life is God. He is the one who is able to give life, life to the dead. He alone has that power to reverse the process of the material world, to bring life out of death.

But as we see in this passage, we see this authority is also given to the Son. The supreme power the Son has also. We have already seen this for those who have read through John that in chapter 4, Jesus has given spiritual life to the woman at the well.

God. In chapter 11 of John, Jesus gives life to Lazarus, raising him from the dead after being dead for four days. Jesus is the one who has the authority to give life.

But no, this is not something that we can command. It's the Son who gives life to whoever he wishes. This is quite a difficult teaching. We don't like the fact that God is the one who calls people to himself.

[15 : 53] But the reality is we can't pull ourselves up out of the sin of our lives. We can't pull ourselves up by our boot strings out of the quagmire of sin that surrounds us, the sin that entangles us and draws us down.

There is no way to be able to get out of that. It is only if the Son calls us. It is only he who is able to give us life. It is only he who enables us to escape sin.

He is the one who gives life. Well the thought moves on to the second greater work. The fact that Jesus has the authority to execute judgment. Let me read that in verse 22 and 23.

The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son so that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. Anyone who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him.

The second thing that authority has been given to for the Son is that he is able to judge. The Old Testament picks up on the fact that the Father is the one to execute judgment.

[17 : 04] Throughout the Old Testament God was the one who was pictured who would judge all the earth in Genesis chapter 18. Throughout the Old Testament throughout its pages we see God bringing judgment on his people.

But also the surrounding nations. We also see that at the end of the age there will be a last great judgment when all the world would be judged both great and small.

The astonishing thing is we see here is that it is not God the Father who judges in the end but he hands it on to the Son.

It is the Son who will judge. God is the Son who will judge the Son. Verse 23 gives us the reason why the Father has entrusted all judgment to the Son.

The express purpose is to ensure that people will give the Son the same honour. You see that judgment that final judgment is the judgment that God only one like God could give.

[18 : 09] by God entrusting it to his Son he is ensuring that the same honour will go to the Son as it would go to him. We see that in verse 23 so that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father.

They need to honour both. They have equal claim on honour. This is because they are equal in divine nature. Therefore to dishonour the Son is a very serious thing.

Very serious. Well these two aspects of giving life and judgment come together in verse 24. Very truly I tell you anyone who hears my words and believes him who sent me has eternal life and does not come under judgment but has passed from death to life.

Here we see that the Son is the arbiter of destiny. He is the one who is able to give life or judgment. But notice there is a human responsibility there.

to all who hear his words hear and believe they are given eternal life. We need to heed Jesus' words.

[19 : 23] We need to listen to what he has to say. We need to believe that the Father has sent him that this is God's purpose and divine will. here we see that we need to heed these words of Jesus, that we have a responsibility in deciding which way we are going to follow.

Because it says there those who do not heed his words will die. For those who have have eternal life and have passed from death to life. Notice the implication here, the present tense, that they have already passed from death to life.

There is an aspect of what has been said here that those who trust in Jesus' words now pass from death to life. They have life now. They will live now.

But it also has implications for the future. So here we see this tension, this tension of living now and in the future. The tension of Jesus bringing judgment now and in the future.

Jesus bringing life now and in the future. This tension is brought out in the next set of verses. We see there from verse 25 through to the end. Let me read verse 25.

[20 : 39] Very truly I tell you the hour is coming and is now here when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. Here we see Jesus saying the time has come now.

If you listen to his voice now you will live. you will have eternal life now even though we may die for we know that we have eternal life.

We notice in verses 28 and 29 Jesus moves through to talking about that time when we will rise from the dead. Where we will have that eternal life that we long for of which now is but a shadow.

well verse 26 goes on to explain how the Son is able to give life. For just as the Father has life in himself so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.

Just as God has life in him as a part of his very nature so Jesus has life in him. When I was born my parents gave me life.

[21 : 46] It was my parents and God's graciousness that I have life. But for God he has life in himself. He's very much a part of his nature.

We see this in Genesis chapter 2 where God breathes into man. We see in Job 10 life as a gift from God. We see also that he is a fountain of life.

God is the one who has life in himself. life. But the son has the same life as well. It is a part of his divine nature. That is why the son is able to give life because he has life in himself.

The same kind of life that God has. Verse 27 goes on to explain why Jesus has been granted authority to judge. And he has given him authority to execute judgment.

Because he is the son of man. The reason why Jesus is able to execute judgment is because he is the son of man. This is the figure that is spoken about in Daniel 7 verse 14.

[23 : 01] This heavenly figure to whom is given authority, glory and sovereign power. This figure that would come from heaven. It would be for all the peoples and nations and every tongue would come and worship him.

and he would set up a kingdom which would have a dominion, an everlasting dominion, a kingdom that would not pass away, a kingdom that would never be destroyed. Jesus is saying he is that son of man, the one that was spoken about in Daniel chapter 7.

Jesus is the one who is the son of man. And because he is the son of man, he is given the authority of final judgment. the climax is reached in verses 28 and 29 where we look at this future final resurrection.

We have been talking about the fact that now we have life. But in verses 28 and 29 we look at those end days, the time when Christ will come again.

Look what it has to say in verses 28 and 29. Do not be astonished at this for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and will come out.

[24 : 14] Those who have done good to resurrection of life and those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation. Here we see the son calling out when he comes again.

He calls out to all the graves and every single person, both evil and good, will rise before him. Those who have loved darkness, those who have rejected God, condemnation, but those who believe on Christ, eternal life.

But notice here the judgment is on the basis of works. It's on those who do good or those who do evil. Be careful here though.

It's not saying that we're saved by our good works. It's not by doing the good things that we actually get to heaven. As we saw in verse 24, it's those who hear Jesus' words and believe them.

who recognise that there is nothing they can do to get themselves to heaven. There is nothing they can do to pull themselves up there. It is only through what Christ has done. Now it's not through good works that we're saved.

[25 : 26] But it's the fact that the people who enter eternal life are those that believe in Jesus. And their lives bear the fruit of that. They live lives of faith and obedience.

They bear fruit of the things that they have done. As we look through this passage, we see that we are truly in the presence of greatness, the greatness of Jesus Christ.

We see that he does all that the Father does because they are equal in nature. Therefore he's able to give life both now and eternally. He's the one to bring judgment on all.

He's the great word of life. He is the one providing living water, water that will come gushing up to eternal life. He's the bread of life. He is the resurrection in the life.

He has words of eternal life. He is the authority of the Father. He is the Son of Man. We are in the presence of true greatness.

[26 : 35] So how are you going to treat these words? How are you going to treat Jesus? What are you living for at the moment? What is betrayed here before us is two ways to live.

The first way is our way, where we reject God's rule and try to run our own life, our own way. The result of this, we are condemned by God, facing death and judgment.

The second way to live is God's new way, where we submit to Jesus as our ruler, where we rely on Jesus' death and resurrection.

The result? We are forgiven by God. God's wrath we are given eternal life. In John chapter 3, the Bible puts it this way.

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him. life. You could not get two more different ways of life.

[28 : 01] They present you with a question. Which of these two ways do you want to live? You need to think very carefully about this. It would be worthwhile investigating the claims thoroughly, for if they're true, the consequences are life or death.

But if you know that you're a rebel against God, and that you would prefer to live his way, then the next obvious question is, what can you do about it?

What to do? You need to talk to God. You need to admit that you've rebelled against him. You need to ask for mercy on the basis of what Jesus has done in your place.

you need to ask him to help you change from being a rebel to someone who lives with Jesus as their ruler. It might be a prayer, something like this.

Let me read the prayer for you. God, I know that I am not worthy to be accepted by you. I don't deserve your gift of eternal life.

[29 : 17] I am guilty of rebelling against you and ignoring you. I need forgiveness. forgiveness. Thank you for sending your son to die for me that I may be forgiven.

Thank you that you rose from the dead to give me new life. Please forgive me and change me that I may live with Jesus as my ruler. Amen. If you recognise that you need to pray this prayer, that you want to live as Christ as your ruler, then you might like to pray that prayer.

We're all going to pray this prayer now. I'm going to read it out and in the quietness of your own mind you might like to pray that prayer. For those who already are Christians, you might like just to reflect on the commitment that you have made to God and thank him for that.

Let me pray. Dear God, I know that I am not worthy to be accepted by you.

I don't deserve your gift of eternal life. I am guilty of rebelling against you and ignoring you. I need forgiveness.

[30 : 42] Thank you for making your son, sending your son to die for me, that I may be forgiven. Thank you that you rose from the dead to give me new life.

Please forgive me and change me, that I may live with Jesus as my ruler. Amen. to be king. throne from o'