

- I. Conclude John's story that began in John 9:1
 - A. Today, we will conclude John's story about Jesus healing the man born blind. And just as a reminder, this story began in John 9:1 and concludes in John 10:21.
 - B. John 10:17-21 . . . For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. [18] No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father." [19] A division occurred again among the Jews because of these words. [20] Many of them were saying, "He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?" [21] Others were saying, "These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?"
 - C. Pray
- II. Jesus says that the relationship between the Father and Himself is similar in nature and practice to the relationship between He and His sheep.
 - A. These words in vs 17, "I lay down My life so that I may take it again," and in vs 18, "I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again," are two of the clearest revelations of Jesus' deity – and they come from Jesus himself. A third statement, which appears in vs 30 of this same chapter, is clearer still, for in that verse Jesus says, "I and the Father are one."
 - B. However, before considering the claims of Jesus in vs 17-18, I want to go back and look at His words in vs 14-15, for they present a profound truth that we did not look at last Sunday.
 1. John 10:14-15 . . . "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, [15] even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."
 2. Last Sunday we focused on Jesus being our Good Shepherd, so I won't say any more about that. But what I want to point out today is the fact that Jesus compares His relationship with us (*He knows us, we know Him*) to His relationship with God, the Father (*He knows the Father and the Father knows Him*).

3. Listen carefully, once more, to these words from Jesus, “I know My own (*sheep*) and My own (*sheep*) know Me, [15] even as, or just as or in the same way the Father knows Me and I know the Father.
4. What I am hoping you can see here is the depth of relationship between Jesus and those who believe in Him, for Jesus says it is like the depth of relationship between He and the Father.
5. Now it seems reasonable for us to assume that the relationship between Jesus and the Father is a mutually deep, mutually intimate, mutually trusting, and mutually meaningful relationship.
 - a. In other words, they know each other – fully, because their relationship is mature, open, and honest. Their trust is mutual and unbounded, and their love for each other is pure.
 - b. And though in our humanity – and while living in this world – we may never rise to the perfection of relationship with Jesus that Jesus has with the Father, nevertheless, Jesus says that those who are His sheep, that is, those who are genuinely born again, have – or at least can have – a relationship similar in nature and depth as the relationship Jesus has with the Father.
 - c. Therefore, regardless of what you think is possible or what you have experienced to date, Jesus says He knows you and you can know Him in the same way – or at least in a similar way to the way the Father knows Him and He knows the Father.
 - d. Now once again let me be clear! I am not saying that the relationship between Jesus and you is equal to the relationship between the Father and Jesus, but what I am saying is that it is so similar that Jesus speaks of it as being like the deep, intimate, trusting, loving, and therefore meaningful relationship He has with His Father.
6. Now without discounting the many Christians who have this kind of deep and meaningful relationship with Jesus and with the Father, it does seem that there are those who don’t – and you may be one of them, and as one who doesn’t, you may be wondering why not.
 - a. Though there may be a number of places to start in addressing your experience or the experiences of others in the church, I am choosing to start with these words from 2 Corinthians 5:19, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.” In other words, one of God’s primary purposes for giving Jesus to die in our place is to re-establish relationship with once rebellious, but now repentant sinners. And the process of re-establishing damaged or broken relationships is called reconciliation.

- b. Therefore, reconciliation is a process that restores a damaged or broken relationship to a condition where it is a healthy, harmonious, mutually trusting, and mutually loving.
 - (1) In other words, reconciliation begins by bringing the parties together and identifying those things which damaged or ended the relationship.
 - (2) Reconciliation continues its process by removing or putting an end to the damaging behaviors, working out the differences, and bringing about genuine apologies and forgiveness.
 - (3) And finally, reconciliation reunites those involved and sets a course that promotes a meaningful relationship built on mutual trust and love.
 - c. You see, how we lived before being born again broke our relationship with God, and how we live after being born again either strengthens or damages our relationship with God.
7. James makes it clear that as a Christian, we can degrade, become distant from, or do damage to our relationship with God by –
- a. seeking things to gratify our flesh,
 - b. or by wanting things of this world which war against the mutualness of our relationship with God,
 - c. or by acting in prideful ways.
8. But James also makes it clear that we can repair the damage, live together in peace, and strengthen the relationship. Listen to these words from James 4:3-10, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. [4] You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. [5] Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: ‘He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us’? [6] But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, ‘God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ [7] Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. [8] Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. [9] Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. [10] Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.”
9. Now you may be wondering how reconciliation and either strengthening or damaging our relationship with the Father and Jesus fits into

what Jesus said about our relationship with Him being like the relationship He has with the Father?

- a. The reality is, God has already taken every action necessary to restore our broken relationship with Him and with His son to the best condition possible while we yet live in this world.
- b. Therefore, the rest is up to you. And such a relationship is possible because God has provided an open door and all the means necessary to the fullest possible relationship with Himself and with His Son.
 - (1) You have God's empowerment, the enabling work of the Holy Spirit, the living word of God, free access to God through prayer, and the help and encouragement of other believers.
 - (2) You have been freed from the power of sin and are protected from any temptation greater than you can bear.

10. Therefore, I urge you to trust what Jesus says about your relationship with Him being like His relationship with God. And in trusting, purposefully do what you need to do to fulfill your side of the reconciliation process. And if you will do that, you will – though it will be progressively – you will enter into a deep, intimate, trusting, loving, and therefore mutually meaningful relationship with the Father and the Son.

- C. The last words in vs 15 are, "I lay down My life for the sheep." In these words, Jesus is doing two things.
 1. First, He is telling us that part of being the Good Shepherd includes laying down His life for the sheep.
 2. Second, Jesus is setting us up to see His deity, that is, to see that He is God in human flesh.

III. Jesus proclaims His deity in saying He has the power to die when He wants and how He wants, and the power to raise Himself from the dead – all while living like one of us in this world.

- A. John 10:17-18 . . . "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. [18] No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."
 1. As I stated earlier, these words, "I lay down My life so that I may take it again," and, "I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again," are two of the clearest revelations of Jesus' deity.

- a. Isaiah prophesied many years before that Jesus would pour out Himself to death, and be numbered with the transgressors – and in doing so, He would be bearing the sin of many and interceded for the transgressors (Isaiah 53:12). But notice, there is no mention of Jesus raising Himself from the dead.
 - b. It wasn't until Jesus walked on this earth that He proclaimed He had the authority to pick the time, place, and way He would die AND He had the authority to raise Himself from the dead. And the fact that He fulfilled what He claimed proves His deity.
 - (1) You see, God cannot die, but Jesus did, which means He was human.
 - (2) And though humans can pick the time, place, and way they will die (*we call this suicide*), no human has the authority from God or has the authority to act as God in taking his own life. And no human can raise himself from the dead. Yet Jesus did, which proves He is God.
2. The primary point here is that Jesus is declaring Himself to be both the carpenter's son and Immanuel, both man and God.
 3. However, there are four other points that should get our attention.
 - a. First, Jesus says God loves Him because He has freely and deliberately chosen to lay down His life so that He can take it up again. This is a reminder that the death of Jesus for the sin of the world is not the complete solution for saving sinners.
 - (1) If Jesus had only died and stayed dead, that is what would happen to us. However, Jesus died and rose again. He died to save us from all the aspects of sin, and He rose from the dead so we could and would live for Him and with Him – now and for eternity. Notice, it is for this complete act that Jesus says God loves Him.
 - (2) And though we are well aware of God's love for us in spite of our weaknesses, failings, and sin, the point Jesus makes is nonetheless true for us. What we do has an effect on God's love for us, for Jesus himself said, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love" (John 15:10).
 - b. Second, Jesus says that "No one has taken [my life] away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative." In spite of what Pilot, the Pharisees, and the other religious leaders thought they were doing, they were not working against God's will, or thwarting God's purposes, or working of their own accord.

- (1) Now it is true, they are responsible for putting Jesus to death. But Jesus not only allowed it to happen, He willingly submitted to their evil scheme to rid themselves of Him.
 - (2) Jesus could have stopped them, for as He said, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels ($6,000 \times 12 = 72,000$)?" (Matthew 26:53).
 - (3) But the fact that Jesus could have stopped them but did not stop them confirms that He gave up His life willingly and deliberately – at the right time and in the right place.
- c. Third, though Jesus is God, He demonstrates a godly humility toward God by acting as one in submission to God rather than telling God what to do. We see this when Jesus says, "This commandment I received from My Father."
- (1) In other words, Jesus is not deciding on His own when, where, and how He will lay His life down and when He will take it up again. In fact, He is not deciding that He will die as if the decision is His alone to make, but rather it is a decision that fulfills the Father's will for Him.
 - (2) This is important for us to see because Jesus is our example of how to live as Christians. And in addition, God has predetermined that we are to be confirmed to the image of Jesus. Therefore, practicing this kind of humble submission to God is part of becoming like and living like Jesus.
 - (3) And this is important because we are Christ's lights in the world – showing the true way to God and how to live a life that is pleasing to God.

IV. Division in religion vs unity in the Christian church

- A. John 10:19-21 . . . A division occurred again among the Jews because of these words. [20] Many of them were saying, "He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?" [21] Others were saying, "These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?"
1. Our tendency is to base our conclusions about a person or situation on what we can see or have seen – as if that is sufficient. However, a person's observable manifestations or the observable parts of a situation don't always tell the whole story – which is why it is wise to ask good questions, listen carefully to what is said, and see if there is more to the story than the eye can see.

2. But there is more! It is equally wise to have compassion, mercy, understanding, patience, and even long-suffering when dealing with anyone, just as God has had all these things for us. What is happening or has just happened need not define the person or situation, for a person can change, grow, and mature, and in so doing not do what they did any more. And in the same way, situations can change so that what was is no longer the case.
- B. With this in mind, consider the amount of division within the Body of Christ, and consider the cause or causes for much of the division.
1. Sadly, many of the divisions within the church are due to disputes over theology or forms of practice.
 2. One of the saddest theological divides is over free will (*Arminianism*) and the sovereignty of God (*Calvinism or Reformed Theology*). I say this is one of the saddest because the Bible teaches both as if they make up a complete whole. Yet so many Christians have divided over these two points of view as if they cannot co-exist.
 3. Then there are the divisions between the Catholics and Protestants, the Baptists and Methodists, those who like traditional worship and those who want contemporary worship, those who want a salvation message every Sunday and those who want spiritually practical teaching from God's word, those who baptize children and those who only baptize believing adults. Then there are those who divide over who holds the power or who is in leadership.
 4. Though division is common, it ought not to be. Here is what Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:1-6 . . . "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, [2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, [3] being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [4] There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; [5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6] one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."

V. Conclusion

- A. This story, as told by John, began with Jesus healing the man born blind and ends with division among the Jews as to who Jesus really is. My encouragement to you is to re-read the story and consider once again the many lessons within the story that God has for you.