

**“He Shall Come to Judge the Living and the Dead”**  
(John 5:19-30 – Last Judgment – November 10, 2024)

John 5:19-30 – <sup>19</sup>Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. <sup>20</sup>For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. <sup>21</sup>For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. <sup>22</sup>For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, <sup>23</sup>that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. <sup>24</sup>Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. <sup>25</sup>Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. <sup>26</sup>For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, <sup>27</sup>and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. <sup>28</sup>Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice <sup>29</sup>and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. <sup>30</sup>I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.”

Dear Redeemed in Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Man, Judge and Savior of all:

“Who are you to judge me?” A person may say this if he feels someone is putting himself in a higher position over him, claiming to have higher moral standards by which to judge him. “Who are you to judge me?” says: “As a human, you are no better than I am. Your sense of right and wrong has no authority over how I live my life.”

This was Jewish leaders’ objection to Jesus. Who did He think He was, preaching to them about right and wrong, making Himself Judge over them? In Jesus they saw only a man, with no authority over them. They took offense because Jesus “*said that God was His Father, making Himself equal to God*” (vs. 18). Here as Jesus responds, He shows that they rightly understood His claim. As the Son of God in human flesh, the Father had committed all authority to Him as the Life-Giver and Judge over all.

Therefore He says: “*that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him*” (vs. 23). Many may praise Jesus as a great man and teacher. Yet it is still unbelief that dishonors Him as nothing more than a man and says: “Who are You to judge me?” But by God-given

faith, we truly honor Jesus as our only Savior and Life-Giver. By faith we cling to Him alone who died on the cross to take away our sins and rose again to give us eternal life.

We confess this faith in the Apostles' Creed. After saying that Jesus died and rose, we say that He ascended to the right hand of His Father; and that from there: **“He Shall Come to Judge the Living and the Dead.”** As Jesus teaches in our text, He will come **1) Bringing perfect justice as Judge of all, 2) Bringing eternal life for all who believe.**

### **1) Bringing perfect justice as Judge of all**

First, Jesus warns those who would say, “Who are You to judge me?” that as the Son of God and Son of Man, He has all authority to judge. He says: *“The Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son”* (vs. 22). And the Father: *“has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man”* (vs. 27).

As the Son who is given all authority, Jesus does nothing different than His Father. As He says: *“The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner”* (vs. 19). Just as the Father and Son are one in essence as God, so also they are one in purpose and one in judgment. Jesus says: *“I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me”* (vs. 30).

So when Jesus comes on the Last Day to judge the living and the dead, it will be with righteous judgment, based on perfect justice. He describes what will happen: *“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation”* (vs. 28-29).

This is what we would expect of a just judge. Even in a human court, we expect, even demand, that if a person has committed some crime and hurt someone else, he deserves just punishment. A judge who simply looks the other way is not a good judge. So it is with God. Justice must be served for *“those who have done evil.”* God cannot look the other way. If He did, He would not be a just God; nor would He even be loving. For to let sin and evil go unpunished, would be to accept all the hurt and ruin it caused. At the same time, a good judge will pronounce *“those who have done good”* innocent. They are free of all charges against them. They are justified in a court of law.

Here, we are faced with the question: “Where do I stand in God’s balance of justice? Will I be judged as having done good or evil? When Jesus comes to judge the living

and the dead, and I hear His voice calling me forth from the grave, will it be “*to the resurrection of life*” or “*to the resurrection of condemnation?*”

At this point, the religion of man insists: “If at least I have good intentions and try to be a good person, God will reward me. If the Judge sees in the balance of my life more good works than bad, He will let me into heaven.” By this, they dumb down the Law of God; for what does perfect justice require? Perfect obedience and righteousness in thought, word, and deed, all life long. Romans 3:20 says: “*Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*” Those who hope to stand before the Judge at the Last Day claiming to deserve heaven by their own good works, simply do not understand all the ways they have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

But Jesus does. Not only does He see and know all things as God, but also as a Man. Here we note that He says the Father has given Him authority to execute judgment “*because He is the Son of Man.*” As the Son of Man, Jesus Himself has felt all the injustice and hurt caused by the sin and evil of mankind; and He takes it all personally. He highlights this in Matthew 25:31-46. When He comes as the King in all His glory, He will separate those who belong to Him from all others, as sheep from goats. He will say to on His right, whom He counts righteous: “*Whatever you did to the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.*” But to those on His left, who insist that they have done good works meriting heaven, He will say: “*Inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.*” Even in the smallest of ways they failed to obey the Law of love and do good to others, He takes it personally. “*And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.*”

This leaves the sinner asking, “How then can I be saved? How many times has Jesus seen, not only the wrong things I have done, but even the right things I have not done? How many times has He taken it personally, even when I thought evil against someone; or I said something hurtful to them; or I was selfish toward someone He put in my life, when I should have served them in love? If the Judge is to render perfect justice, how can I, a sinner, be counted among the righteous in the resurrection to eternal life?”

## **2) Bringing eternal life for all who believe.**

The good news is that the very one who will come to judge the living and the dead, is the one who already came into the world as our Savior to win eternal life for us. This too is in perfect unity with the will of His Father who sent Him. Jesus highlights this as He says: “*For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will*” (vs. 21). And again: “*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life*” (vs. 24).

Here we see that Jesus' judgment will be based on faith or unbelief. Unbelief leaves sinners in a condition of spiritual death, separated from the only Savior who gives life. But faith unites us with Jesus, who died and rose again for our salvation. It is the faith that believes in the Father who sent His Son to be our Savior from sin, death, and hell.

It is the faith we confess in the Apostles' Creed: that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was "*conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.*" As the sinless Son, Jesus satisfied the just demands of God's Law by keeping all of it for us. His will was perfectly conformed to His Father's will. He did the works His Father sent Him to do in every thought, word, and deed, in every act of unselfish love and service, even to the point of giving His life for us. And this is the life God counts to us for our righteousness.

As we also confess in the Apostles' Creed, Jesus "*suffered under Pontious Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried... The third day He rose again from the dead.*" Jesus satisfied the justice demanded by God's Law in His suffering and death for our sins. God punished His Son instead of us. Jesus bore the curse for our sins on the cross. He died and took our sins away to the grave. God gave the proof in raising His Son from the dead. In our living Savior, He declares us justified, forgiven and free from all condemnation.

Now Jesus unites us to Himself in eternal life. How does He do this? By the power of His Word and faith. As He says: "*He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life*" (vs. 24). Already by faith, Jesus has raised us with Himself in a spiritual resurrection. By the power of His Gospel, the Holy Spirit raised us out of our former condition of unbelief and spiritual death, into faith and eternal life in Christ. In Baptism, we were buried with Jesus in death to sin and raised with Him to new life, as the forgiven and cleansed children of God, and heirs of eternal life (Romans 6:3 ff.).

This spiritual life that we already have been given, united with our Savior by faith, will culminate in the resurrection at the Last Day. When Jesus comes in His glory, He will call our bodies forth from the dust of the earth and reunite them with our living souls as glorified bodies. He will gather us at once to His right hand, as His own sheep who have known His voice. He will present us to His Father as those He has washed by His precious blood, clothed in His righteousness, and counted with all His goodness. The King of heaven will say to us: "*Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*" (Matthew 25:34).

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.