



Sunday, February 1, 2026

John 5:31-47

So today we find ourselves in the second half of Jesus' discourse in John chapter 5. From verse 16 all the way to verse 47, this entire section is Jesus' response to the Pharisees wanting to kill Him - not simply because He healed a lame man, but because He healed him on the Sabbath.

When confronted, Jesus responds by saying, 'My Father is working on the Sabbath - and so am I.' In doing so, He equates Himself with Almighty God: calling God His Father and claiming the same divine exemption from the Sabbath that only God possesses.

From there, Jesus spends the next thirty verses laying out example after example of His authority and sovereignty. And yet, He never explicitly says, 'I am God,' or 'I am the Messiah.' Instead, He forces His listeners to draw that conclusion themselves - through His works, through Scripture, and through divine revelation.

Now, as we step into the second half of this discourse, Jesus turns up the intensity a little bit as He now points beyond Himself and calls attention to the other voices that testify to who He is.

So with that in mind, if you have your Bibles with you this morning, I'd like to invite you to turn with me to John 5:31-47. And if you are able to, please stand for the reading of the Word of the Lord:

John 5:31-47

'31 "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. 32 There is another who testifies about me, and I know that the testimony he gives about me is true. 33 You sent messengers to John, and he testified to the truth. 34 I don't receive human testimony, but I say these things so that you may be saved. 35 John was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.

36 "But I have a greater testimony than John's because of the works that the Father has given me to accomplish. These very works I am doing testify about me that the Father has sent me. 37 The

Father who sent me has himself testified about me. You have not heard his voice at any time, and you haven't seen his form. 38 You don't have his word residing in you, because you don't believe the one he sent. 39 You pore over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, and yet they testify about me. 40 But you are not willing to come to me so that you may have life.

41 "I do not accept glory from people, 42 but I know you—that you have no love for God within you. 43 I have come in my Father's name, and yet you don't accept me. If someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. 44 How can you believe, since you accept glory from one another but don't seek the glory that comes from the only God? 45 Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. 46 For if you believed Moses, you would believe me, because he wrote about me. 47 But if you don't believe what he wrote, how will you believe my words?"

So as we step into this section, Jesus opens by saying that, 'If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true.' Which at first glance, can sound troubling - almost as if Jesus is saying He's not trustworthy. But that's not what He means at all.

Jesus isn't making a statement about honesty here - He's making a statement about authority and verification. In the Jewish legal system, a claim wasn't established by a single witness. No matter how confident or compelling that witness might be, truth had to be confirmed. It had to be corroborated.

So when Jesus speaks about Himself, even though His words are true, He allows other significant voices to corroborate His witness - so that even by Jewish law, His testimony would stand as fully confirmed, established, and beyond dispute.

The first voice He references is none other than John the Baptist. And if you remember the beginning of our series, it was John the Baptist who prepared the way for Jesus. And his was a voice that the religious leaders of the day actually listened to. They questioned him. They investigated him. They took him seriously.

And John was unmistakably clear about who Jesus was. He said he was unworthy even to untie Jesus' sandals - language meant to signal humility before someone far greater. In other words, John understood his role and would often articulate the fact that he wasn't the Messiah, but that he was the one sent to prepare the way for Him.

And it's worth remembering that around the same time as Jesus' miraculous conception, there was also the miraculous conception of John the Baptist. Even before either of them spoke a word publicly, Scripture tells us that John - still in the womb - responded to the presence and authority of Jesus when both Mary and Elizabeth visited each other while pregnant. So, from the very beginning, John's life pointed away from himself and toward Christ.

And yet - even though the religious leaders initially held John the Baptist in high regard, the moment they realized that Jesus didn't fit their expectations of the Messiah, they changed their tune drastically.

But Jesus doesn't leave His testimony resting on John alone. He now points to something even greater. He brings in the authority of God the Father and the works the Father has given Him to do - works that, throughout Israel's history, only God Himself could perform.

Jesus says that even though they have never seen God the Father at any moment in time, the works He is doing, the Scriptures being fulfilled, and the revelation unfolding before their eyes are more than enough. They testify that His authority comes from the Father - and that He and the Father are indeed one. Because apart from God, none of this would be possible.

But Jesus doesn't stop there, does He? He presses even deeper as He begins to confront something far more personal - their relationship with the Scriptures themselves.

And keep in mind, all of this is taking place long before the printing press. Scripture was written by hand, on scrolls. It was time-consuming. It was costly. And because of that, each town only had a limited number of scrolls. Naturally, they were guarded and cared for by the religious leaders of the day.

So naturally, these were people who knew the Scriptures better than anyone. They studied them. They memorized them. They poured over them. And yet Jesus says, in essence, you're so close - but you're still missing the forest for the trees.

Notice the specific wording that Jesus uses here. He says, 'You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you will find eternal life.' That's a powerful visual and it's meant to be. The picture before us is these religious leaders, literally with their faces buried in the text, searching for life.

And yet the very Scriptures they were studying were calling them to look up - to see that the Word

had become flesh and was now dwelling among them in the person of Jesus Christ.

But they could not - nor would not - choose to accept that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh - not because the evidence was lacking - but because ultimately He did not fit their expectation.

And when expectations, personal preferences, and selfish desires become more important than truth, something dangerous happens. Instead of allowing Scripture to shape their worldview, they began reshaping Scripture to fit the worldview they already wanted.

And Jesus calls this out in verse 40 when He says:

‘But you are not willing to come to me so that you may have life.’

It wasn't that they could not come to Jesus, it was that they would not come to Jesus. They weren't willing. They weren't willing to believe that Jesus was the way to the father. To which Jesus responds by saying that they don't actually love the father, because if they did, they would welcome the Son as well.

Think about that statement for just a moment. These were men who had devoted their lives to the scriptures - to protect them, to interpret them and follow them. And in their culture, they were seen as highest authorities when it came to God's Word.

Jesus knows this. And He also knows that they do not recognize Him as having divine authority, but notice that he doesn't fight it. But instead of arguing that point directly, He turns their attention to the one they trust most. He says, in effect, don't take my word for it but look to the one you revere most. Look to your forefather Moses.

Because Moses, the very one that gave them the law, the one they trusted, the one they built their identity around, wrote about Jesus. And if they truly believed the words of Moses, then they would believe the words of Jesus. But since they refuse to believe, Moses now stands not as their defender, but as their accuser.

Jesus tells a story in Luke 16 that captures this perfectly. In the parable, a rich man finds himself separated by a great chasm from a poor beggar named Lazarus. Desperate, the rich man begs Abraham to send Lazarus back from the dead to warn his family.

Abraham responds in verse 29 by saying, “They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’ And then again in verse 31 that, ‘If they don’t listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.’

In other words, even resurrection won’t convince a heart that has already decided not to believe.

So Jesus is making it unmistakably clear that the same Moses they trusted would become their accuser if they rejected the very Messiah that Moses pointed toward.

Which raises a sobering question:

They regarded John the Baptist as a prophet - but they rejected his testimony about Jesus. They acknowledged the miracles - but refused to believe in the One who performed them. They searched the Scriptures - yet closed their eyes to what those Scriptures revealed. And now even Moses, their most trusted defender, stands ready to accuse them.

So again, the question isn’t why couldn’t they believe?

The question is - why wouldn’t they believe?

And I think the answer to that is found in verse 44 where Jesus says:

John 5:44

‘How can you believe, since you accept glory from one another but don’t seek the glory that comes from the only God?’

The Greek word for glory here is the word *Doxa*, which refers to validation, affirmation and recognition.

And, history teaches us that this is exactly how the religious leaders of the day, the pharisees and even the rabbi’s all treated each other. They all fed each others ego’s with constant validation, affirmation and recognition.

And that’s why belief in Jesus was so difficult.

Because their whole belief system was predicated upon themselves being the ultimate authority over the Scriptures and therefore always right. To believe in Jesus would mean surrendering their

authority and giving it to Him. It would mean admitting they misread Scripture and didn't have the final authority on it...it would mean admitting that they missed what Moses was saying...and it would mean admitting that the miracles that Jesus performed actually pointed to His divine authority and identity as God in the flesh...

And that was a cost they were unwilling to pay.

So instead of surrender and sacrifice, they chose selfish ambition - and ultimately glory from one another over the glory that comes from God.

Did you catch that? At first glance, it's easy to read this as though Jesus is saying they chose giving glory to one another instead of giving glory to God. But that's not what He says. Jesus says they chose receiving glory from one another instead of receiving glory from God.

This is significant.

Because throughout Scripture, we are taught that part of our role as human beings is to give glory, honour, and praise to God. We see it in the opening chapters of Genesis, and we see it at the very end in Revelation, where even the heavenly creatures give glory and honour and praise to God.

But now Jesus is saying that not only does God deserve all the glory, but He's also the One that gives it! So it seems then, that the deeper meaning here is that in right relationship with Christ, He is the One who brings us true validation, real affirmation, and meaningful recognition. Something that no human relationship could ever produce.

And because they refused to come to Jesus, they didn't just miss out on eternal life in the future, but they also missed out on the life that He offers in the present, the here, the now - a life of true glory that no human system could ever provide.

As we come to the communion table this morning I'm going to ask the servers to come forward and start handing out the emblems - and as they do there are two points that I want you to consider this morning:

The Bible says that when you seek, you will find, and that when you seek him with all of your heart, you will surely find him. Stop seeking the things of the world to give you the validation and affirmation and recognition that you were made only to receive from God. And it's not just obvious things

like media, success or culture. If we're not careful, even good things can take that place.

For example - affirmation after I preach. It's good when it happens. But if I become dependent on it, and it's not there, I can walk away from Sunday feeling deflated. That's a sign I've started looking for something from people that I should be receiving from God.

And the same thing happens in our relationships. Husbands and wives are meant to affirm one another - that's good and right. But when we ask another human being to give us what only God can give, the weight becomes too heavy, and the relationship eventually fractures under it. No person was ever meant to be your ultimate source of worth. Only God can carry that role.

The Pharisees searched the Scriptures for life - but they couldn't recognize it when it was standing right in front of them. They knew the words. They studied the text. But they missed the transformation the Scriptures were meant to produce.

So my prayer is that we would be a people who search the Scriptures - not just for information, not just for knowledge - but for life. For repentance. For obedience. For the kind of change that only God's truth can bring.

And as we come to the table today, may we not just read about Jesus—but receive Him. Not just study the Word—but submit to it. Not just know the truth—but allow it to shape us.

Blessing

May the Lord Bless you and Keep you
May He cause His face to Shine upon you
May He be gracious towards you
Lift up His countenance upon you
And may He give you peace
In Jesus name, Amen.

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