

January 28: John 5

Vs. 1-18, Jesus now travels back to Jerusalem for an unnamed festival and has compassion on a man who had been sick for 38 years. It was believed that an angel of the Lord visited the pool of Bethesda at certain seasons and stirred up the waters, and whoever stepped in first when the waters were stirred up was made well. Others had support systems to help them reach the waters first, but this man for 38 years had watched others with the right support system be made well while he remained sick from his ailment. He thought the only way he could be healed was if he could make it to the waters first, which he assumed would never happen. Jesus tells the man to stand up, pick up his mat, and walk, the man does so and is made well. And then immediately gets in trouble for “working on the Sabbath” because he is carrying his mat as Jesus told him to. Vs. 14, Jesus speaks to the belief at the time –not necessarily to the reality. Sin does not cause ailments, but the people listening to him believed that was the case. Throughout his healing ministry in the gospel of John, Jesus rejects this assumption that sin causes blindness and disease, rather he points to overcoming affliction as a sign of the glory of God. When the religious authorities discover that Jesus was the one who told this man to work on the Sabbath, and who himself healed on the Sabbath, they began persecuting him. Then, Jesus made them REALLY angry, angry enough that they now begin plotting to kill him, because he said that God was his Father and that his healing on the Sabbath is connected with God’s work which never takes a Sabbath, making his work equal to God’s work. This is viewed as blasphemy.

Vs. 19-47 is Jesus’ response to and defense against the ire that is now felt toward him by the religious authorities. Jesus’ work reflects God’s work in the world. We know the Father’s work by seeing what the Son does. Jesus’ works of healing are connected with God’s own work of resurrection, of giving new life to those who felt like they were dead. Vs. 24 Jesus connects hearing and believing in him with receiving the gift of eternal life. It is by faith in Jesus that we are saved, not by our own works, but by the works of the Son which create faith within us. Jesus, the Son, will judge the living and the dead, but Jesus is a JUST judge, Jesus judges according to God’s gracious will. In the biblical tradition, judgment is the distinctive work of God, which Jesus says has now been delegated from Father to Son. The testimony about Jesus that is greater than John’s testimony are the works of Jesus, for the fact that Jesus can do these works points to God’s testimony and confirmation of Jesus’ power. Jesus can do nothing apart from God’s will. The scriptures also testify to Jesus, but those in authority do not interpret them correctly. They refuse to understand that which was written as pointing to Jesus. God is the one who testifies on Jesus’ behalf.

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