

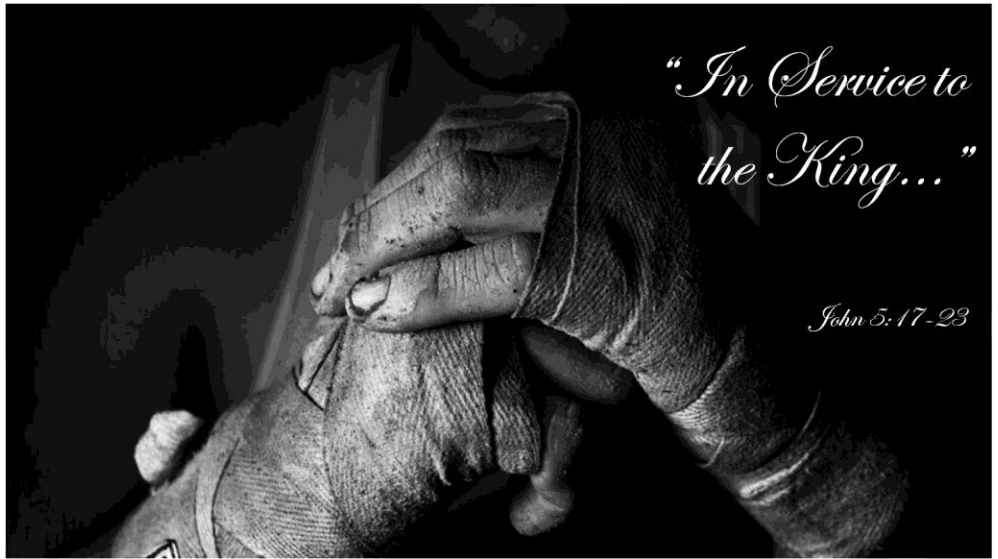
“In Service to the King”

– *John 5:17-23*

by **Pastor Tim Dodson**
at **JF Believers Church**
in **Menomonie Wisconsin**
on **January 10th, 2016**

17-23 *But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." 18 Therefore the Jews sought all the*

more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. 19 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. 20 "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. 21 "For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. 22 "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, 23 "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.



*“In Service to
the King...”*

John 5: 17-23

I am forever struck by the length and magnitude of the anti-christian propaganda in our generation. Not merely the usual debates of scriptural authenticity and the venting of the angry wounded “I-hate-church-and-all-christians” folks. But even the cyber-worlds bitter monologues about how Jesus never really existed, right beside the blog that says He *did* exist but He wasn’t God and never said He was, and a click later we read about a modern day hippy Jesus who has rolled with the ever changing culture and didn’t actually say all that was attributed to Him and even if He did, He didn’t really mean it.

I can’t help but be amazed at how much press Jesus gets for being a perceived “work of fiction.” It seems like a great deal of effort exerted over someone who they believe supposedly didn’t exist or if He did, was apparently an imbalanced homeless man who thought He was God. It seems that some people have a great deal of time on their hands! Maybe we should anticipate the upcoming Pulitzer prize winning work on how ‘Slow Pokes’ aren’t *real* candy bars, and the announcement of the quarterly meeting of the “I-hate-Fords” club. Seriously? “...*me think thee protesteth too much.* I do not find myself inundated with books, blogs, t-shirts, bumper stickers, clubs, and legal societies that exist to poo-poo the reality of elves and fairies, so why Jesus?

In our text, Jesus had just healed a lame man that hadn’t walked in 38 years. Now this is where the nay-sayers will quickly retort “*so He said...*” Ok, if that is the case, then why get all up in His face if all of this didn’t go down? I would imagine we could find a guy living under a bridge in Minneapolis that claims to be the “Son of God” today, but nobody is giving *him* any press or starting entire social communities to negate his claim like the “American Atheists” organization complete with a national convention and a magazine publication. So let me get this straight, this atheists group is an organization that doesn’t actually *promote* something, but rather exists wholly to spend all of their time saying something *doesn’t* exist? **Why?**

These religious leaders were noticeably uncomfortable by Jesus. They did not just shrug off His activities or His claims. They just couldn't let it go! They were the first playground children yelling "*Did not! Did not!*" Instead of simply looking at the cold hard facts before them, they rejected the truth because of the sheer ramifications of that truth. Because if Jesus was healing by the power of God, and claiming He was the "Son of God" ...making Himself equal with God, He was either a nut job or they had to seriously reconsider their life plan! As far as Messiahs go, this Jesus was just way too expensive...

Like so many folks today, they feigned rejection of His words and claims, but went ahead and crucified Him for them. If He was a liar, why not just ignore Him and go home and watch some TV? Today we summarily reject all of His words and claims also, and we then join clubs that exist solely to negate those claims, put bumper stickers on our cars that reject those claims, wear t-shirts that call all His claims lies and yell nasty things at people who believe them because apparently, again, folks have a lot of spare time on their hands!

The fact is, I think these guys DID believe it and that is what freaked them out. Romans 1:19-21 says "*They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks.*"

So here we have some guys that are doing their level best to find a reason to **not** believe...a cause to reject Him. And yet it appears that the harder they fought it, the more they were being sucked in! Ultimately, like with all of us, a final decision would have to be made. Not "is Jesus the way" but **will I follow Him?** Because belief...even salvation, is free. But following Him...*discipleship*, will cost you **everything**.

In the 1990's, one of the fads of the greater church community was bling that had on it WWJD...or "*What Would Jesus Do?*" Of course the philosophical ramifications were intense and were meant to be, but rarely did a bracelet ever profoundly affect one's true lifestyle. It has been said...rightfully so I think...that we would be better off to ask "What **DID** Jesus Do?" And according to His own words...what Jesus **did**...*are you ready for this?*... was **work**.

Oh how that can make us bristle! The reality is, we, like the Pharisees, can come to the table with such entrenched opinions and unmovable presumptions that we too can refuse the facts before us. Because to consider otherwise would shake the core of our religious mores and the truth is many of us have built our **lives** upon those religious ideals instead of upon the scriptures...*as they lay*, and upon "What **Did** Jesus Do?"

Let's read the verse again... "*But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."* Generally, to bring this issue up in church company can get people riled up. For we want to hold white-knuckled to the **gift** of salvation...we want to embrace **free grace** and cling to the "**unmerited favor** of God." We have been taught for years that "with Christ we could do **nothing**." (John 15:5)

Are these things true? Indeed! But through all of such teaching we have allowed ourselves to be rather indoctrinated with a lopsided ideology. And why not? We like the principles of "free"... "unearned"...and "gift." Who wouldn't? But if Jesus is indeed the "mark" for our lives...the example of how to do this Christian life...the "bar" of faith, then we are still left holding this absolute fact; Jesus **worked**. His life was one of sacrifice and other centered pursuits. He was in this whole life thing for more than comfort, material gain, and deified care.

It can be an oft convenient thing to embrace all that Christ has done and all that He is willing to do *with*, and *to*, and *for* us, and forget about the other side of the coin. To forget that Jesus saved us *for something*! But our tendency toward cultural consumerism and American entitlement creeps into our faith, and we willingly receive all His blessings but want it to stop there. In fact, it often moves beyond such to the point where, like little children on Christmas morning, we take the position of “*is that all I get?*”

Jesus spoke again on this issue in John 9:4 “*I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.*” Few of us so live in the light of our mortality...the ‘brevity of our lives.’ And if we do, we see such rather as a short period in which to “grab all the gusto we can get.” We quickly sight all the “reasons” that we cannot serve Jesus...excuses rather, as to the baggage we are forced to carry...the ‘burdens’ we personally endure which will believe excuses us from the spiritual “draft.” Never do we see such as compulsory or duty. It is a strange thing to somehow feel that forgiveness from all sin, and receiving eternal life is ‘not enough.’ We would never actually SAY that...*we just live it...*

Now it is critical that we do not misunderstand this issue! Let us not misquote Jesus herein, and I too would like to not be misquoted. Even Jesus knew where His ‘mo’ was comin’ from. He says in verse 19, “*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.*” So we’re not called to rush the devils ‘line of scrimmage’ with some sort of Rambo ‘can do’ kind of mentality. Because you *can’t*. Not alone.

Without the protection of our Creator, we have every reason to believe that Satan would just kill us all. We are not called to act in that “mighty mouse” manner. But it is also incredibly presumptuous and arrogant to know that Jesus was here to serve and work but we don’t need to..that we get a free pass because we are busy raising a family, climbing the corporate ladder, or getting our college degree. The passage before us points out the fact that even Jehovah God...Author and Creator and *owner* of the universe actually *still* works...motivated by a love for His creation!

It seems that Jesus was highly motivated by the same passions that consume some of us today. He loved the Father and the Father loved Him. God called...God equipped...God provided opportunity and the power to complete the task, but Jesus actually moved in that realm of supernatural symphony. This is the sphere of relationship that we are to live in with our God! A dialogue of communion. A union of mutual blessing.

I wonder however whether we have or even *can* embrace this obedience? Can we take upon us the mantle of service and working for the kingdom without bristling in self-righteousness? In hyper-spiritual “indignation?” For I have heard on numerous occasions the angry defense of a disobedient or rebellious believer who seeks special dispensation...a ‘special pass’ for their behavior and pulls out the grace card to do it. The stiff-necked cry of “*God does it all!*” issues forth from their lips as a perceived “get-out-of-jail-free” card. No, *He doesn’t*.

He calls for, and requires your, participation...*your involvement*. Even salvation requires your willing participation! God will not forcibly conscript you to life as a Christian and eternity with Him. We choose. We agree or we don’t. That’s participation! And then most certainly following that, in the realm of discipleship, maturity, and growth as a believer into all that we are made to be. We are to be actively involved...patently and intrinsically participatory in what God is playing out in our lives!

This truth is not demeaning toward God or taking away from His omni-power and universal sovereignty. I’m not saying God *needs* us or is unable to unilaterally affect any and all to His liking. He made the stars after all! He can do anything without limit! But God has designed a paradigm that inexplicably involves each one of us. And such is so very crucial...*critical even*, to our living out of the faith in a fully dynamic fashion.

So use whatever adjective description you wish...it changes nothing. God is the motivator...the manifest power behind it all, the instigator and the Calvinistic “chooser”. He is the equipper and the preparer. The trainer and the general-in-charge. One could go on without end as to His attributes and involvement. But all of it does not take away from the fact that God is calling for you to be intrinsically and personally involved in what He is doing.

Apparently He takes great joy in such...simply because He loves us so very much and seeks close communion and community with each of us! In other words, He doesn't *have* to do it that way, but He does because He *wants* to and quite honestly because it is a critical element in a love relationship. Free will involvement is a necessary aspect of true salvation and dynamic living, and certainly in *real love*! And that is where the buck stops! For love must be our motivator as much as it was for Jesus and as much as it is for the Father God even today. When we do what we do out of a deep and abiding love, there is no false motivations or skewed reasoning's when we step out to serve and to “work” for Jesus. No excuses...no apologies, and no avoidances.

Out of love, we *work*.

I know that such a word is not popular within church circles, and often rejected by whole groups of those embracing the name “Christian.” But Jesus has pointedly taken a very implicit opportunity to express to all of us just what it means to work and serve as a Son of God. It was played out at great cost, far more than mere inconvenience...for His service would cost Him His very life. He would die because of His work. He would die because of His *love*. What will we do for ours?

In John 7:29, Jesus ...speaking concerning His Father said “... *I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me.*” I wonder if the rest of us are so able to say that? Do we actually look at our lives as so being on that kind of mission? Do we believe we are “sent?” Sent into this life for kingdom purpose as well as blessing? Sent into our church, our families, our workplaces and our communities?

Please note again that Jesus did not operate alone. He did not work independent of His Father. He did not act independently or operate selfishly. He went to great lengths to stress that He did only what He saw His Father do. This fact can be lost on the overt understanding of the alpha position of Christ in the grand scheme of things. We can miss the ‘nod’ to the Father here, and throughout scripture for that matter. For Jesus was throughout His earthly ministry pointedly making an example of servanthood for all of us that would follow Him on the road of ministry. It was not just a matter of *what* we do, but *how we do it*. We can so easily and quickly forget that, and take off down the ‘path of busy’ and with mere blind religious activity.

But God did not leave us without directions. In fact, from Genesis to Revelations Jehovah God has meticulously presented Himself to His creation. We certainly acknowledge that the task was at times huge. For one can only begin to appreciate the species gap, *it you will*, between human and Creator Deity. I mean, this was the God of Moses, that lit him up like the sun on Mount Sinai, all in attempt to show Moses His glory! But that being said, He left us the whole record of scripture in a detailed account of not just who He is, but so much of the aspects of His continuing work of love for His creation. What and how! *How* He reached out to the world and its inhabitants...*how* He ministered, *how* He gave, *how* He disciplined, *how He loved*...

This book is not merely a historical account, but a virtual “how to” manual of how to do our work. This is one reason why we read it so carefully...so purposely. So that those of us that are His servants, know how to be in the “service to the King.” So we will know how to love and work *like the King Himself*...