

Many years ago, in a frontier town, a horse bolted and ran away with a wagon carrying a little boy. Seeing the child in danger, a young man risked his life to catch the horse and stop the wagon. The child who was saved grew up to become a lawless man, and one day he stood before a judge to be sentenced for a serious crime.

The prisoner recognized the judge – it was the same man who, years before, had saved his life. So he pled for mercy based on that experience. But the judge silenced the man by saying to him, “Young man, many years ago I was your savior. Today, I am your judge, and in the name of justice, I sentence you to be hanged.”

Many years ago, Christ died on the cross as your Savior. Soon, you will be standing before him on Judgment Day, and he will be your judge. What will Jesus say to you on that day? Are you ready to be judged on Judgment Day? Are you ready, my friend?

Today we are in the second Sunday of the season of the church year known as the “End Times.” One of the things we focus on during this time of the year is the end of the world, and judgment day. Our goal for this morning is to prepare you for that day. According to the Bible, Judgment Day could come at any moment, and we want you to be ready. In the Bible, Jesus tells us that one day, we will see him do amazing things. In verse 20 of our text for this morning, Jesus says, “For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.”

Jesus said this to people who were arguing with him. The leaders of the Jews were upset with Jesus, because he had healed a man on the Sabbath. They didn’t like him. They didn’t like what he did. They didn’t like the attention he was getting. They accused him of being a false teacher, disobeying God the Father in heaven.

Jesus here sets them straight. He’s definitely not separate from the Father – the two of them work together in perfect harmony on everything. Every time Jesus healed a person, even on the Sabbath – he and the Father were working together. Like Father, Like Son. Does God the Father take the Sabbath off? Does he stop working one day out of every week? The world could not afford to have God take even a 5-minute break from his constant work of preservation. Like Father, Like Son. If the Father needs to work on the Sabbath, the Son needs to show mercy on the Sabbath. What a callous Savior he would be if he said to the paralytic, “Sorry, you caught me on a bad day. Try finding me tomorrow and I’ll heal you. “But you haven’t seen anything yet,” Jesus told them. “Some day you’ll see the Father and me working together on something even greater.” And then Jesus went on to tell them about Judgment Day. In verse 21, he talks about how he will someday raise people from the dead. And then, look at verse 22: “Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son.” The Jews at that time thought that on Judgment Day, God the Father would judge the world. But Jesus here tells them that that’s not how it’s going to be. He will be the judge – Jesus – the one they were arguing with – the one they were accusing of being a false teacher. Someday, on Judgment Day – Christ would be the judge.

Do you know why Jesus told them this? He wanted them to realize that their version of religion was wrong. Just honoring God the Father in heaven wasn’t enough, if Christ was going to be the judge someday. They needed to honor not just the Father, but the Son – look at verse 23: “That all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.” Jesus was telling

the people that if they really wanted to be prepared for Judgment Day, just honoring God the Father wasn't good enough. They needed to honor the Son, Jesus Christ, just as they honored the Father. If they didn't, they wouldn't be prepared for Judgment Day.

Based on this passage, I would say that our world today is completely unprepared for Judgment Day. Most people in our country do believe that there is some sort of a higher power out there, some sort of God. And most people believe that someday, there will be some sort kind of judgment. But most people do not believe that Jesus Christ is God, and that he will judge the world. Most people, really, want nothing to do with Jesus Christ. He's too controversial. He's the one those religious extremists talk about, but not normal Americans.

There was a television show out about 10 years ago "Joan of Arcadia." It's was about a girl going to school who had a special relationship with God – God talks to her, God helps her, gives her advice. I read an article about that show years back in Time Magazine. The writer didn't like the show. "God is too generic," the writer said. "He's is reduced to being The Divine Advice-Giver – he helps you be a better person and more open-minded, and that's about it." "God is so generic," the writer said, "so lacking in any kind of principles, that he's not even God." And you know what? The article was right!

That's the god that most people worship today - some sort of vague higher being, who helps you be more open-minded, who helps you be a nicer person, who tells you to not be a racist, but be more loving – that's about it. "Don't bring up the subject of sin, and don't bring up the subject of Jesus Christ - that's for those religious extremists. We prefer a generic god who just wants everyone to be nice." My friends, that is the American version of Christianity, and that's why your typical American is completely unprepared for Judgment Day. Hardly anyone is honoring Christ, and therefore honoring the Father. What do you think will happen to all these people when Christ returns on Judgment Day?

What about you? Has the world rubbed off on you? Are you prepared for Christ's return? Have you been honoring not just the American version of God – but have you been honoring Jesus Christ, the one true God, in your life? When the subject of religion is brought up in conversation, do you prefer to talk about the generic, American god, or do you talk about Jesus Christ? Perhaps you prefer to not talk about God at all? Is Jesus Christ as important to you as your spouse, or your child, or your job, or your health, or sports? Or, is Christ for you a once-per-week hobby that you have time for, but only if you have nothing else to do? Are you really honoring Christ as the God of your life? Are you ready for him to judge you today?

We cannot help but feel uncomfortable when we think about these things. We know that we have sinned in our lives. We know what we are like, deep down inside. How can anyone have any hope when thinking about Judgment Day? Jesus gives you that hope – look at verse 24: "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and will not be condemned. He has crossed over from death to life." Would you like to cross over from death to life today? In many churches, you will hear a list of things that you must do – "5 steps to be ready for Judgment Day." But according to Jesus, the Judge, that's not how it works. It's not up to you to become a more perfect person prepared for Judgment Day. If you want to cross over from death to life, Jesus here invites you to do one thing. One simple thing – and that is to believe – to hear his word and believe.

Believe what? Believe that this Jesus is your God. Believe that as God and man, Christ died on a cross, and paid for every single sin you have ever committed in your life. Believe that when the Bible says that you are forgiven, you are really forgiven. Believe that when Jesus says he is your Savior, he really is. And if you have any doubts – then look at the resurrection – the biggest piece of evidence that there ever was in a courtroom – Jesus rose from the dead – proof that he really is your God, your Savior. You really are a forgiven child of God. Believe these words of grace, and you have crossed over from death to life.

Whenever I hear about a wildfire out in California, it reminds me of an illustration I heard once about Judgment Day. Many years ago, the pioneers were making their way across one of the central states to a distant place that had been opened up for homesteading. They traveled in covered wagons drawn by oxen, and progress was very slow. One day they were horrified to note a long line of smoke in the west, stretching for miles across the prairie, and soon it was evident that the dried grass was burning fiercely and coming toward them rapidly. They had crossed a river the day before but it would be impossible to go back to that before the flames would be upon them. One man only seemed to have understanding as to what could be done. He gave the command to set fire to the grass behind them. Then when a space was burned over, the whole company moved back upon it.

As the flames roared toward them from the west, a little girl cried out in terror, "Are you sure we shall not all be burned up?" The leader replied, "My child, the flames cannot reach us here, for we are standing where the fire has already been!" And that's exactly what happened – the flames roared all around them, but they were safe on the land where the fire had already been.

This is a picture of you on Judgment Day. When God returns, he promises to destroy the world by fire. But you believe in Christ, your Savior. You have crossed over from death to life. You are standing where the fire has already been. The fire of God's Judgment has already burned itself out on Christ when he died on the cross for you. You believe in Jesus, which means you are safe forever, because you are standing on the cross of Jesus Christ, where the fire has already been.

Are you ready to be judged by Christ on Judgment Day? The answer is yes. Jesus will look deep into your heart, and he will see that you have faith in him. He will see that you believe in him. He will smile and look at one of the angels, and point to you and say, "This one, is one of mine. Do you see any sin?" And the angel will say, "No, Lord Christ. You have taken his sins away."

And Jesus will look back at you, the great Judge on Judgment Day, and he will smile once again and say, "Come, my child, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world." How blessed you are who believe in Jesus.