

John - Part 35 - Sermon Manuscript - Life is a Gift

This morning we'll finish John chapter 10 - we'll start in verse 30. And as you turn there I'd like to just recap what's going on in this scene...

Jesus is talking to the Jewish religious leaders of His day. But I want us to think about the fact that these religious leaders weren't just priests like we think of today. These guys actually had some level of authority.

The Roman government basically allowed the Jews to govern themselves, so long as they didn't disrupt Roman society. So while they had to live under Roman law, they also lived under their own laws... and the religious leaders had the authority to enforce those laws.

If you were to commit a crime according to Jewish law, the religious leaders would then act as your judge and jury. You might be sent to jail, or worse yet, in some cases they actually had the authority to have you killed! And that's what we're about to see in our passage today.

There were just some things that the Jewish religious leaders had zero tolerance for... and Jesus went ahead and pushed that button. He said in verse 30...

John 10:30 - "I and the Father are one."

What does that mean that they are *one*?

Today, when a couple gets married, we say that the two become united as one. But we don't mean that the man and woman combine on a subatomic level and literally become one entity - that's just silly.

However, that's pretty much what the Greek means! It's literally, "one single unit." Jesus is saying that He and the Father are literally one single unit - While they are distinct as the Son and the Father, they are at the same time "one."

This is why Jesus said to Philip...

John 14:9 - “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”

Think about that. If you’re in the first century, standing next to Jesus... when you look at Him, you’re seeing the Father... because God the Son and God the Father are *one*.

Now, when Jesus said that He and the Father are one, the Jewish religious leaders knew what Jesus was talking about! And look at how they reacted...

John 10:31 - “Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him”

Usually when someone commits a crime, they’re taken before the Jewish leaders and their case is heard. The Jews then act as the judges in that situation.

But here, they’re thinking the crime is so unthinkable and so obvious that they don’t feel the need to even let Jesus have a trial! They immediately picked up stones with the intent on killing Him right there on the spot!

That’s what stoning someone means... you’re thrown into a pit, and people throw stones at you until you die. It’s a horrible way to go... but that’s what they intended to do!

Now, if any one of us were in this situation, I’m thinking we’d be panicking! If the Jews wanted to stone me, I’m sure I would have tried to run. But despite an intense situation, Jesus remains calm and before they can throw anything at Him, He says this...

John 10:32 - “I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?”

In other words, at this point, Jesus has done many miracles ... that’s no secret! So He asks which one warranted the death penalty. But as it turns out, at least in this case, it’s not His actions that got Him in trouble, it was His words...

John 10:33a - “We are not stoning you for any good work,” they replied, “but for blasphemy...”

What's blasphemy?

When someone is guilty of speaking blasphemy, that means that they have disrespected God or even something sacred. For example...

[Blank 1] Think about the time when God brought His people out of Egyptian slavery - It's a historical event called the Exodus.

Yahweh God was responsible for making that happen. And yet, barely a year after they left Egypt, the Israelite people made for themselves a golden calf and began worshiping it as their god - that's blasphemous right there, but they took it even further...

They credited the golden calf for bringing them out of Egypt!

Now, if you're Yahweh God, that's *highly* offensive! It's completely disrespecting God. And that event is actually called *blasphemy* in Nehemiah 9:18, 26.

Blasphemy is anytime we disrespect God with our words.

And so the Jewish religious leaders were offended by the words of Jesus because when He said that He and the Father are one, they considered that blasphemy because...

John 10:33b - "...because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

Again, they understood that Jesus was claiming to be God. In their minds, He was setting Himself up as God, which was simply an unthinkable crime, punishable by death according to the Jewish law.

But before anyone could throw the first stone, Jesus was like, *hold on a second...*

John 10:34-36 - Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are "gods"'? 35 If he called *them* 'gods,' to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be set aside—36 what about the one whom the

Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'?"

[Blank 2] Again, don't forget that at this moment, Jesus is in a life or death situation... and He doesn't seem to be worried one bit - probably because He knows that He's the only one who has the authority to take His life and to raise it up again (as He said in verse 18).

Still, He's got people staring back at Him with extreme anger, ready and willing to kill Him... knowing that according to their law, they have every right to do so. And yet Jesus uses this as an opportunity to teach them something...

He quotes Psalm 82!

He says, "Is it not written in your Law (in other words, is it not written in the Scriptures), 'I have said you are 'gods''?"

So, to understand what Jesus is getting at, we really need to look at Psalm 82...

Psalm 82:1-8 (ESV) - God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment: 2 "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? 3 Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. 4 Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

[slide change] 5 They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. **6 I said, "You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; 7 nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince."** 8 Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!

[Psalm 82:6-7] Okay, so the question is... who are the little g *gods*? (the *sons of the Most High*?)

This is an example of where pastors have to decide for themselves: *How far down the rabbit hole should I go with this one?* Because this rabbit hole is deep! It's so deep that I'll just say this...

The “gods” in Psalm 82 are either human beings, or, they’re rebellious spiritual beings who were part of God’s council.

If they’re human beings, some people take that to mean that they were judges - Not judges like Samson - but judges like in a courtroom.

And if they’re rebellious spiritual beings, that means that at some point they had been given authority to judge (which happened in Deuteronomy 32:8-9), but now that authority has been taken away from them because they rebelled against God.

Whichever option you choose, it doesn’t really matter because we’ll still come to the same conclusion as to why Jesus chose to quote this Psalm.

But personally, my opinion is that the “little g gods” in Psalm 82 were the rebellious spiritual beings.

To me it makes the most sense when I read the Hebrew. But it also makes sense because the Old Testament never calls Israelite judges gods (unless of course Psalm 82 is the one exception).

There’s a whole lot more to this debate, but regardless of whoever the little g gods were, the fact remains that they were called “gods” by God Himself!

Now, they’re not gods in the sense that they’re equal with Yahweh God. There is no God like Yahweh God! It helps to let go of the idea that the word “g-o-d” is a name. Strictly speaking, the word “God” is not a name. In the OT, the word that’s translated as “God” (*elohim*) **always** refers to spiritual beings.

So, that’s why I often say *Yahweh* God. Because Yahweh is God’s name that He revealed in the Old Testament [LORD God = Yahweh God]. And Yahweh God is unlike any other god because He is the uncreated, self existing one (that’s what His name means!). He’s the one who has all authority and power over everything and everyone, including the little g gods that we tend to call angels.

So, in Psalm 82, these little g gods that once had authority given to them by Yahweh God, they're standing in the presence of Yahweh God and His divine council and are found guilty. They've rebelled against Yahweh, and now their authority is being stripped from them. Because of their sin, they will die like mortals.

Now, Jesus uses this Psalm to say to the Jewish religious leaders in John 10, *Look - even the rebels of Psalm 82 were called gods... so why do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said that I'm God's Son?*

Because, on the one hand, if human Israelite judges are called gods in Psalm 82, then the Jewish religious leaders could essentially call themselves gods as well. So why would they be mad at Jesus for doing the same thing?

On the other hand, if the gods in Psalm 82 are rebellious spiritual beings who were once part of God's divine council, well that has some major implications! The spiritual beings in God's divine council are consistently called Sons of God in the OT. And if they're called Sons of God, why would Jesus be guilty of blasphemy when He calls Himself God's Son?

[Hebrews 1:4-5] Because, as Hebrews chapter 1 tells us, Jesus is ***far superior to the angels***. God never said to any of them, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." He only ever said that to Jesus!

[Blank 3] But Jesus isn't a little g god. He's Capital G God! That's why He's called the *unique* Son of God in John 3:16 - because there is no other god like Him.

Jesus, the Son of God, and God the Father, are ONE.

The question now is, will the religious leaders believe that Jesus is God or not?

John 10:37-39 - Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father. 38 But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." 39 Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.

[Blank 4] Clearly they didn't believe Jesus. They tried to arrest Him so that they could have Him stoned to death, but Jesus slipped through their fingers. Then John tells us what happened next...

John 10:40-42 - Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. There he stayed, 41 and many people came to him. They said, "Though John never performed a sign **[John the Baptist]**, all that John said about this man was true." 42 And in that place many believed in Jesus.

So, the whole point of this passage is for us to ask ourselves:

Do I believe Jesus is God or not?

There really isn't any 3-point self help message here. Our passage today is simply asking: Do we believe that Jesus is God?

There comes a point in our lives when we all need to make this decision. Maybe you can remember back when you first believed? If so, I'd love to hear your story someday if you'd be willing to share it.

But this morning I'd like to invite my dad up to the stage to share his story of when he first believed in Jesus. He shared his testimony the other week at the baptism service, but he also mentioned that he put his story in the form of a song... and this morning he'd like to share that with us...

Life is a Gift - song and testimony from Scott MacFeat (my dad)

[Blank 5] The Bible says that "If you declare with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved ... for, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:9-10, 13)

And when you put your faith in Jesus, the Bible says that you will have life, and life to the full - real life - eternal life. And that life in Jesus, is a gift that He freely gives to anyone who chooses to put their faith in Him.

So, if you've never put your faith in Jesus, I would encourage you to do just that right now. And if you have put your faith in Jesus, I encourage you to thank Him for loving you, saving you, and adopting you into His forever family.

I'll give you a few moments to pray right where you are, and then I'll jump in and pray as the worship team comes out to lead us in our last song.

Let's Pray



Background image by Wirestock on Freepik¹

¹ <https://www.freepik.com/free-photo/wide-angle-shot-single-tree-growing-clouded-sky-during-sunset->

