

Introduction: As I begin these notes, it is the Saturday afternoon before Father's Day. What better time to pause and give thanks *for God's Fatherly Care*, in His infinite and intimate compassion for us in our temptations and trials? More than that, in our study of John 3-5 this week, we will admire *how the Father, Son and Spirit work together* as our Triune Family, to save, sanctify and glorify us forever! How much the Father loves the Son because He lays down His life for the sheep, (John 10:17)! How much the Spirit loves and glorifies the Son as our Savior, "taking from what is Christ's" and revealing it for our good and our Savior's glory, (John 16:14)! Most of all, look at how the Spirit and the Son are so zealous to promote the worship of God the Father, seeking and finding sinners like the Samaritan woman at the well so that they might teach her to honor the Father by worshipping Him in Spirit and truth!

Mon/Tues: read John 4:21-26. We turn first to the work of the Spirit in John 4 to see how the Father, (*by the Spirit*), *seeks sinners and changes their hearts into God-glorifying worshippers!* In other words, we start our bible notes this week by marveling at the Spirit who goes before the Father and the Son to prepare the ground for the progress of and the glory of the Kingdom of God. This preparatory work of the Spirit, in fact, ties together John chapters 3-4. For example:

In John 3, we see the Spirit preparing the ground ... in Nicodemus' heart ... by taking away from that proud Pharisee all hope in his own merit. He must instead be brought back to a state of help-lessness as a babe saved by grace alone – he must be born again!

In John 4, we see the Son compelled by the Spirit to go through Samaria... Why? Because the Spirit has been working in the heart of the Samaritan woman who would meet Jesus at the well. Moreover, through her witness, the Spirit would prepare a great harvest of souls among the Samaritans – leading many in that region to confess that Jesus is indeed, "the Savior of the world"! (John 4:42)

In all these ways, our focus is on the preparatory work of the Spirit... who goes before the Father and Son in order that the spotlight of glory might shine away from Himself onto the Father and the Son!

Meditate and Pray: "Oh, Holy Spirit, please go before us into all the challenges that lie before us! Some are facing the valley of the shadow of death. Some are struggling to recover from cancer. Some are burdened with the wickedness of this world. Please reassure each that you have all these problems in hand, because you always go before us and prepare wells of grace and salvation, which we will gladly find, as you lead us to find refreshment in our weariness. Amen."

Wednesday: read John 4:27-54. The work of our Savior Jesus is sovereign, self-generated and often hidden from our limited understandings. For example, the Twelve come back from the village of Sychar to find Jesus speaking with the woman at the well. They are perplexed! Jesus is so taken up with seeking and saving this lost woman that He forgoes the food which they had brought back from him to eat! "He has other food to eat, of which they know nothing." That is His reply to their urging, "Rabbi, eat!". In other words, Jesus recognizes that the harvest of souls has come to Samaria – and will soon go forth into the whole world! So He will not rest when so many precious souls are there to harvest!

Meditate and Pray: Let's give thanks that Jesus' passion for human souls is always much more intense than our desire for others to be saved. Whether it is the nobleman who comes to beg Jesus for the life of his son and ends John chapter 4 by believing with his whole household in the Son of God as his Savior, or the Samaritans who stream down the hill out of their village to welcome their Savior, such a zeal to save us from our lost condition is surely worth singing about with the words from the Red Trinity hymnal, (by James Montgomery, # 311):

*Hail to the Lord's anointed,
Great David's greater Son!
Hail in the time appointed,
His reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,
To set the captive free;
To take away transgression,
And rule in equity.*

*He shall come down like showers
Upon the fruitful earth;
Love, joy, and hope, like flowers,
Spring in His path to birth.
Before Him, on the mountains,
Shall peace, the herald, go,
And righteousness, in fountains,
From hill to valley flow.*

*For Him shall prayer unceasing
And daily vows ascend;
His kingdom still increasing,
A kingdom without end:
The mountain dews shall nourish
A seed in weakness sown,
Whose fruit shall spread and flourish
And shake like Lebanon.*

*He comes with succor speedy
To those who suffer wrong;
To help the poor and needy,
And bid the weak be strong;
To give them songs for sighing,
Their darkness turn to light,
Whose souls, condemned and dying,
Were precious in His sight.*

*Kings shall fall down before Him,
And gold and incense bring;
All nations shall adore Him,
His praise all people sing;
For He shall have dominion
O'er river, sea and shore,
Far as the eagle's pinion
Or dove's light wing can soar.*

*O'er every foe victorious,
He on His throne shall rest;
From age to age more glorious,
All blessing and all blest.
The tide of time shall never
His covenant remove;
His name shall stand forever,
His name to us is Love.*

Thurs/Fri: read John 5:1-9. John's Gospel begins in the midst of the first year of Jesus' ministry, with the calling of the first disciples (Jn 1:19-51) in A.D. 26, followed by the first miracle at Cana (Jn 2:1-12). Jesus' first public attendance at Passover in Jerusalem follows, as He cleanses the temple for the first time, (Jn 2:13-25). After this time in Jerusalem in John 2-3, we begin what is called by some, "The Year of Popularity" – (not descriptive of the Jewish leaders in their hatred of Christ early on) – but of the massive crowds of Samaritans (John 4) and Galileans who attended to Christ's miracles and teaching. Many amazing miracles during this time are recorded in Mark chapters 1 & 2.

Jesus then returns to Jerusalem for another important religious feast, (Jn 5:1-47). If this feast was another Passover celebration, it would have taken place in the spring of A.D. 28. A year earlier He attended the Passover in John 2, and later observed that, in December of that year, "There were still four months to the harvest" (John 4:35), pointing to April of A.D. 28.

John 5 contains profound teaching about the shared work of the Father and Son in their labors of salvation – but it begins with a simple and beautiful miracle which even a child can understand! There is a man who lies paralyzed, (along with hundreds of others with various debilitating ailments) – all lying under the five-pillared porch next to the Pool of Bethesda. What a sound of misery and wailing must have reached Jesus' ears as He heard the cries of those who begged God to send His healing angel, hoping against hope to be the first into the water when the angel visited the Pool. Of course, the man to whom Jesus speaks would have been the most *unlikely* to find any help. Thirty-eight years of lying there proves that there was no one willing to help him into the water in time for healing.

No surprise that when Jesus asked him, “Do you want to be made well?”, he expressed neither faith *to be made whole*, nor *receptiveness to the idea*. My pastor in Scotland insightfully comments that, perhaps this paralytic was so *used to his condition and his entire attitude of self-absorption that he simply could not envision any change in his life!*

Be that as it may, the Lord Jesus sovereignly chooses to heal him with a word – taking the most miserable and despairing affliction to be found in that tragic place, and demonstrating to all that He had the power to handle even the most difficult of cases! The result must have been awe and wonder in the crowd of sick ones! Alfred Edersheim says that there must not have been any whose eyes still looked to the Pool for angelic healing after beholding the *healing without waters being stirred* of the paralyzed man! With only a word he was made whole! Wonderful!

Meditate and Pray: “Lord, we do not ask for angelic visitations today, or even spectacular miracles merely of our bodies and not our souls. Please work in us *from the inside out*. Cause us to see your beauty and love for us in our sins, and to be increasingly drawn into sweet communion with you. Thank you also that you *do have power* to touch fevered and tormented bodies with your mercy and peace. We would pray for that as well, as you see fit. But most of all, help us to live by the words of this hymn below. Amen.”

*Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
Wean it from earth; through all its pulses move;
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art;
And make me love Thee as I ought to love.*

*I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies,
No sudden rending of the veil of clay,
No angel visitant, no opening skies;
But take the dimness of my soul away.*

*Teach me to feel that Thou art always nigh;
Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear.
To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh,
Teach me the patience of unanswered prayer.*

*Hast Thou not bid me love Thee, God and King?
All, all Thine own, soul, heart and strength and mind.
I see Thy cross; there teach my heart to cling:
O let me seek Thee, and O let me find!*

*Teach me to love Thee as Thine angels love,
One holy passion filling all my frame;
The kindling of the heaven descended Dove,
My heart an altar, and Thy love the flame.*

Sat/Sun: read John 5:1-24. The Jews persecute Jesus for healing the paralytic on the Sabbath. What a blind, narrow and loveless way to handle this wonderful miracle – which actually *fulfills* the very deeds of mercy which make the Sabbath so special. But they will not come to Christ with any good words of honor for Him. As Alfred Edersheim puts it, they are far more interested in finding the culprit who dared to heal on the Sabbath than in finding the Savior who could make such a wretched man whole!

Jesus answers His critics with full-blown claims to deity. His Jewish foes recognize this, and seek to put Him to death not merely for transgressing the Sabbath, but especially because He claims equality with God! Notice how Jesus builds the case of His deity in the last half of our reading today:

- 1) Whatever the Father does, He as the Son has the power to do as well, (Jn 5:19). Note that Jesus is not a *mere mimic* of God, trying like a little boy to do the “big things” which daddy does. He fully replicates what only God can do, proving His full equality with God.
- 2) The Son has a full knowledge of all that the Father does, because He and the Father dwell together in eternal, triune love, (Jn 5:20).
- 3) The Son has Lordship over death, and can give life with full divine authority, to whomever He pleases, (Jn 5:21).
- 4) The Son has complete holy authority and exhaustive omniscience, so that all judgment is in His hands, (Jn 5:22).
- 5) The Son should therefore be honored just as fully as the Father, (Jn 5:23).
- 6) In fact, there is no way to honor God the Father without worshipping and glorifying the Son, (Jn 5:23)! If one does not approach God only through the Son, then no worship takes place. The Son alone is the Way, Truth and Life!