

17. March 2021

“Jesus glorifies the Father”

Jn 5:17-30

His answer to them was, 'My Father still goes on working, and I am at work, too.' But that only made the Jews even more intent on killing him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he spoke of God as his own Father and so made himself God's equal. To this Jesus replied: In all truth I tell you, by himself the Son can do nothing; he can do only what he sees the Father doing: and whatever the Father does the Son does too. For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he himself does, and he will show him even greater things than these, works that will astonish you. Thus, as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son gives life to anyone he chooses; for the Father judges no one; he has entrusted all judgement to the Son, so that all may honour the Son as they honour the Father. Whoever refuses honour to the Son refuses honour to the Father who sent him. In all truth I tell you, whoever listens to my words, and believes in the one who sent me, has eternal life; without being brought to judgement such a person has passed from death to life. In all truth I tell you, the hour is coming -- indeed it is already here -- when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and all who hear it will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; and, because he is the Son of man, has granted him power to give judgement. Do not be surprised at this, for the hour is coming when the dead will leave their graves at the sound of his voice: those who did good will come forth to life; and those who did evil will come forth to judgement. By myself I can do nothing; I can judge only as I am told to judge, and my judging is just, because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

Today's text allows us to take a deep look at the love that Jesus has for the Father and the love that the Father has for the Son. There is nothing more beautiful than to be able to participate in this love, to live in it and to love in it. Jesus opened the door for us so that we could receive this grace!

Jesus wants us to know his loving Father. He wants us to know Him as He really is. He can offer us no greater treasure than this: His incomparable love. That is why the Lord can only be understood when we realise that His deepest motivation is to glorify the Father. In fact, He undertakes the whole work of redemption in obedience to His Father, and in this work He glorifies Him.

The Jews are scandalised by Jesus, because he calls God “Father”. However, precisely because of the closeness with which Jesus addresses the Father in his words and deeds, they must have recognised how close God had come to them. If they had listened to him with an open heart, without prejudice, they could have learned so much about the Father.

For example, when Jesus told them that *“by himself the Son can do nothing; he can do only what he sees the Father doing: and whatever the Father does the Son does too”*, they would have understood that he does not and will not do anything that does not come from his most intimate unity with the Father. Although Jesus is a concrete person, He is of the same substance as the Father. It is true that the Jews were unaware of this truth, for the faith was progressively understood in the history of the Church. But if the words of Jesus were listened carefully, grace would produce a profound recognition of the truth in them. Those words of the Lord would also resound within: *“For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he himself does, and he will show him even greater things than these, works that will astonish you.”* Gradually, it would be realised that Jesus has not come to humanity on His own; that He is not simply a man with superhuman strength; nor is He a prophet acting as the voice of God to speak to humanity. It might, then, increase the sense that this is one who has a higher authority and in whom the work of God is more evidently manifested than ever before.

Jesus speaks of His Father in a way that no prophet before Him had ever done. None had ever been able to express with such force his relationship to God; none could claim such closeness to Him. There always remained a certain distance between God and His chosen ones, even though He offered great closeness to His people. Only in Jesus, who as the Son of God became man and entered our world, could this distance be overcome.

It was certainly not easy for the Jews to understand this message. Only through trust would they have been able to understand it little by little. With this trust as a basis, we can listen to the majestic words of Jesus: in Him is life; to Him the Father has given the power to judge, for He is the Son of Man; whoever hears Him and believes in Him has eternal life and does not incur judgement, for he has passed from death to life.

We, as faithful Catholics, take all these statements for granted, for they are part of our doctrine. Perhaps we do not even realise the magnitude of these words that

Jesus spoke. Everything that the Jews believed about God, Jesus refers to himself, to make them recognise who it is that they have before their eyes.

But let's go back to the central statement we chose from this text. After Jesus says all this about the enormous power given to him by the Father, he turns his focus back to the One who is the reason he has come into the world and from whom all that he transmits to humanity comes: *“By myself I can do nothing; I can judge only as I am told to judge, and my judging is just, because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me”*.

Jesus keeps his gaze fixed on the Father. He shows Himself as the judge of mankind, as the Saviour of the world and as the obedient Son of the heavenly Father. Everything has been entrusted to Him and He receives everything from our Father.

Here the Lord brings to light the absurdity of Lucifer's pride, for He, to whom in His divinity all power belongs, only wants the Father to be loved and honoured. Whoever honours the Son, honours the Father.

The Lord invites us to imitate Him also in this: that all we do may be for the glory of God (*cf. 1 Cor 10:31*). All the gifts we have received from God, whether natural or supernatural, should not be for the edification and glorification of our own person, but should be for the glorification of God (*cf. Mt 5:16*). If our life becomes a hymn of praise to God, then we go far beyond ourselves and produce magnificent fruit.