

Title: Sabbath Work**[Slide 1]****Text: John 5:16-29****Who do you think you are, anyway?****Doing my job:**

Ever get in trouble for just doing your job?

When I was in grad school I taught Freshman Composition, which means I read a lot of student papers. One of them was truly outstanding; it came with the title, "The Coyote." I gave it an A+.

A few weeks later I was wandering around in the library when a book with a picture of a sailboat on it caught my eye. I pulled it out of the stacks and casually flipped through its pages. All of a sudden the words "The Coyote" jumped off the page; what followed was word for word identical to the essay I had recently graded. Now I knew why it was such a great essay: its true author was none other than Mark Twain.

You can imagine the drama which followed this revelation. I reported the student to the higher-ups and soon caught the blowback from the folks at home! You'd have thought that I was the one who lacked character and integrity. How could I charge such a nice young lady with plagiarism?

My job, you see, came with two responsibilities: on the one hand, I was there to help students become better writers; but I was also required to monitor them for cheating and plagiarism. When I was in my classroom, I, in a sense, *was* the English Department. It was my duty to fulfill its mission, whether it agreed with the students' personal agenda or not.

Just doing my job.

Sabbath-breaker or Sabbath work?

Jesus found Himself in this kind of predicament after healing a paralyzed man by the Pool of Bethesda:

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John 5:16 NIV

So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him.

Jesus replied by going right to the very core question of Who He was and what He was here to do:

John 5:17 NIV

In his defense Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working."

In essence, Jesus was saying: "I'm just doing my job!"

Jesus was saying that His healing of the paralyzed man on the Sabbath was *not Sabbath-breaking*. It was, instead, *Sabbath work!*

Who do you think you are?

So what did that say about Who Jesus was? For the religious police it could only mean one thing: Jesus was making himself equal with God – an offense punishable by death. The radical in-breaking of the creative power of God in the healing of a man on the Sabbath forced everyone who encountered Jesus that day to make a decision: "For" or "Against." There was no middle ground.

Just another miracle worker or something so much more? Who was this Jesus anyway? Was He a rank heretic, or was He just doing His job?

Like Father, Like Son**Fathers and Sons:**

To better explain Who He was, Jesus gave a little parable:

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John 5:19-20 NIV

Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed.

In ancient Jewish society, a son learned his trade from his father. He hung out all day with Dad and watched what Dad did. Little by little, he learned the family trade. This had been Jesus' earthly experience: Joseph was a carpenter; Jesus was a carpenter. A son learning from his Dad would not think of doing anything on his own. He could only do what he saw his father doing.

And this, Jesus said, was the relationship between the Son and the Heavenly Father. He was only doing what He saw His Father doing.

So what did this have to do with the Sabbath and Sabbath work?

The Two Works of God:

The rabbis had long debated the question of *just what God does* now that He has created the world and is enjoying His Sabbath rest. Their answer was that God continues to do the work of *creating life and judging evil*. "Sabbath rest" meant continuing to create life for each generation, and maintaining moral order in the world. This was the Father's Sabbath work.

When Jesus said that "My father is always at work to this very day, and I too am working," He was referring to these two aspects of God's Sabbath work: *giving life and judging evil*.

Like Father, Like Son:

And that meant that healing the man by the pool was God Himself present in Jesus to give life where disease and death had made a claim. Jesus explained it this way:

[Slide 4]

John 5:21-23 NIV

*For just as the Father raises the dead and **gives them life**, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has **entrusted all judgment** to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.*

When Jesus commanded the man to "Get up, take up your mat and walk!" He was doing the first Sabbath work: Giving Life. And when He met him later in the Temple courts and warned him against continuing to sin, He was doing the second Sabbath work: rendering judgment against sin.

Sabbath Work**From Death to Life:**

This is the work that Jesus came to do when He came into our broken world. The Creator – the Word through whom all things were made – had come once again to restore His Creation. If we want to be restored to our true identity and purpose, we must put our full trust in Him. As Jesus Himself said:

[Slide 5]

John 5:24 NIV

"Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life."

Jesus alone speaks the Life-giving Word that sets us free from sin and shame. He alone calls to life that which is dead. If we want His eternal life, we must give Him our undivided attention; we must *listen to Him*.

Listening to Him means more than receiving a temporary blessing from God. It means seeing the vital link between Jesus and His Father. Like Father/like Son. When we do that, we cross from death to life.

Already/Not Yet:

And perhaps the greatest news of all is that this happens *right now in the middle of our messy world*:

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John 5:25 NIV

"Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live."

Jesus affirms that one day He will call forth every person who has ever lived. That will be the day when Creation is made whole once and for all. But even now, we can begin to experience that New World:

*"Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but **has crossed over** from death to life."*

Why? Because Jesus the Son is already present through His Spirit to do the Father's Sabbath work of giving life and judging evil in all its many forms.

Sabbath Work:

I sometimes wonder about that freshman who got caught plagiarizing Mark Twain. I wonder if she learned anything of value from that experience. Did she make the choice to accept the fact that she had been wrong? Did she decide to never cheat like that again? Did she see that a lowly part-time lecturer (me) was only doing my job?

If so, she learned something far more important than English Composition!

Each one of us will experience Jesus' presence in some way every day. He will speak a word of life or a word of correction. Both are Sabbath Work. Both are designed to free us from the brokenness of this world and let us cross over from death to eternal life.

But it's up to us to listen and trust the God who heals through His Son. Like Father/like Son!